

WHEN IS RUSSIA JOINING NATO?  
RUSSIAN SECURITY ORIENTATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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This study has been a very interesting, but challenging process. My family members are the ones that suffer most during this process, while I locked myself inside the office. My lovely wife and my fantastic children have all shown patience and understanding during this time; thanks.

## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to analyze Russia's security situation, its relationship with NATO and if NATO can solve, or help solve Russia's security problems. The Cold War set the stage for NATO – USSR/ Russian relationship and this long common history has colored the parties' perceptions and affected their decisions. In the years after 1991 and the USSR collapse, Russia emerged as the leader of the former USSR republics, while it tried to maintain its status and power. NATO continued to function and started an enlargement process creeping closer and closer to Russian borders, infringing on what Russia perceived as its sphere of interests. The tension between the adversaries from the Cold War continued into the twenty-first century.

Russia has three significant challenges they need to find solutions to or to mitigate potentially negative outcomes. These challenges include; their overreliance on a raw material based economy, a grim demographical trend, and problems associated with the 'near-abroad' nations. Put together these challenges force Russia to reevaluate their security environment.

This study concludes that Russia has more significant problems than NATO and that it would be beneficial for Russia to seek a closer relationship with the Alliance. Russia should view NATO as a friend rather than its biggest threat. NATO is the only organization that has the credibility and capability to provide Russia with increased stability and security.

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## Introduction

*I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.*

-- Sir Winston Churchill

## Background

The signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington D.C on 4 April 1949 established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The parties based the organization on the principles found in the Charter of the United Nations (UN), and an aspiration to live in peace with all nations.<sup>1</sup> Despite this desire for peaceful coexistence, the treaty's fifth article carries a mutual defense statement intended, at the time of inception, to deter the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from attacking alliance members. The principle of NATO's collective safety net was that an armed attack on any member constituted an attack on the entire Alliance.<sup>2</sup> In the aftermath of World War II, nations were tired of war and wanted to focus on peaceful activities; nevertheless, numerous tense situations were brewing. Despite lingering tension, most nations demobilized and tried to channel the spending of their national income towards rebuilding their civilian sector. The USSR, on the other hand, retained a large standing military force. These Soviet forces along with

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<sup>1</sup> NATO home page, downloaded 30 November 2009;  
[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm).

<sup>2</sup> From 1922 and until 1991 the official name of the country was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), commonly shortened to Soviet Union. In 1991 when USSR imploded a new organization was formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which covered some of the same geographical area. Russian Federation (from here called Russia) was the largest republic in the USSR and became the leading nation in CIS.

The concrete result of article 5, which states; "the Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all", was a collective safety net for the member states.<sup>2</sup> NATO home page, downloaded 30 November 2009;  
[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm).



events including indirect and direct threats to the sovereignty of Norway, Greece and Turkey, a coup in Czechoslovakia in June 1948, and the Berlin blockade later in 1948 indicated a Soviet Union with the intent to leverage its power over Europe and expand its influence.<sup>3</sup>

NATO became a counter-weight to the Soviet Union and the large conventional ground forces that stood near the border between East and West.<sup>4</sup> A long period followed, more than 50 years, known as the Cold War, where the Soviet Union and its allies faced the NATO alliance in a ‘stand-off’ that never resulted in a ‘hot’ war between the main actors. Throughout these years, NATO fulfilled its role as a defensive peace guardian against potential aggression by the Soviet Union.

During the Cold War NATO had a defined role and adversary; nevertheless, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many foresaw that NATO had done its duty.<sup>5</sup> However, just the opposite took place. Since the implosion of the Soviet Union, which was NATO’s original *raison d’être*, 12 more nations have entered the alliance and it appears that NATO is growing and thriving in the new security environment.

Lately other emerging issues, rather than Russia, have been more prevalent on NATO and the United States foreign policy radar. Among these issues are Iraq, Iran, China, and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, even though weaker in power and importance, Russia has continued to remain a major player and a potential partner for NATO.

Two obvious questions surfaced after 1991 that are still pertinent questions today: “Is NATO still relevant?” The second question is, “What is NATO’s role in the new security environment?” The first question is not a part of this study; however, given the continued interest to join the

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<sup>3</sup> NATO handbook, 16. Downloaded 30 November 2009;  
<http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2006/hb-en-2006.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Parties are all the member nations; originally 12 nations and via six enlargements NATO has now grown to 28 member nations (current as of February 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Steinfeld, Hans-Wilhelm. *Frihetens bitre tiår (Ten Bitter Years of Liberty)* (Oslo: Cappelen Publishing House, 2001), 7.

security umbrella of NATO; there must be a perceived relevance. Therefore, with relevance assumed/accepted, this study will have in mind the second question when examining the NATO-Russia relationship.

This thesis seeks to answer the question: “Is NATO a Russian security threat, or should Russia see itself as a potential Alliance member?” In the years that followed 1991, NATO appeared to be in a ‘wait and see’ mode. We saw much of the same Cold War rhetoric, both from Russia and from NATO, regarding security issues. Has the security environment really changed and are there reasons for a different and renewed look on the security establishment? As an Air Force officer who joined the Norwegian Air Force in 1988, I see little change in the military attitude towards Russia, as well as little real adjustment in political, economic and organizational cooperation. There remain today many similarities with the Cold War era.

The scope of this paper will cover the period from the implosion of the Soviet Union (1991) to the present with emphasis on the later part of this period. However, there has to be some historical foundation on which to build this thesis, and part of this discussion will go further back than 1991. As the research question indicates, it is the prediction of future events that is the goal of this study; hence, the main weight of effort will be on establishing a basis for making such an assessment and a prediction for the future.

The thesis of this study will assess Russia’s security situation, its relationship with NATO and if NATO can solve, or help solve, Russia’s security problems. In order to do this assessment, Chapter 1 will analyze the shared history of NATO and the Soviet Union/Russia. This chapter will form the foundation for the evaluation of the past; however, it is not the intention of this author to write the history of NATO or the USSR, but rather to use it as a contextual springboard. Chapters 2 and 3 evaluate, based upon sources from NATO and Russia, if NATO is a

potential partner or a threat to Russia. Furthermore, these chapters consider what factors are relevant for a functioning relationship. The next chapter focuses on Russia and the present and future issues and challenges it faces. Chapter 5 synthesizes the past, present and future in order to test the thesis that NATO can solve, or help to solve, Russia's security problems. The last chapter concludes the thesis and discusses recommendations and what implications these might have for NATO and Russia.<sup>6</sup>

Many of the member nations in NATO still live by the same mindset as during the Cold War, particularly the 'newest' members that remember a dominating and ruthless big brother in the Soviet Union. The fall of the Berlin Wall gave freedom to more than 100 million people and the implosion of USSR added another 300 million to the masses that were seeking a new future after the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Despite all the possibilities for cooperation, it seems that fear and mistrust still prevail today. Have we progressed at all since 1991?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The DNI Open Source Center (OSC) serves as the hub of the Intelligence Community's National Open Source Enterprise. OSC collects and analyzes open source information from around the world and makes its products - ranging from textual translations to multimedia productions - available to customers throughout the United States Government. Downloaded from OSC webpage 13 February 2010; [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/community/about\\_osc/1023](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/community/about_osc/1023). The sources for this thesis are many and widespread. The bibliography lists sources ranging from articles, books to other relevant NATO and Russian documentations. Furthermore, several hundred news articles from the around the world, have been used to build an understanding of contemporary issues relevant to this thesis. Language barriers and the volume of articles required the author to access them via Open Source Centre (OSC). Via a tailored search the author received around 6-10 articles every day, that was further filtered manually. The establishment of OSC in 2005 was a step in the modernizing of the intelligence gathering process. The Center incorporated CIA's previously existing Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), launched in 1941. OSC is a United States governmental product and be must treated with extra prudence even if OSC as an organization strive to provide unbiased news. The articles used here cover the period from June 2009 to April 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Steinfelt, Hans-Wilhelm. *Hatet i Europa; 20 år etter Berlins andre fall (The Hatred of Europe; 20 years after the Wall came down)* (Oslo: Cappelen Publishing House, 2009), 192-193.

General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev did seek membership in NATO in 1954. President Boris Yeltsin did the same in December 1991, announcing that it was Russia's long-term political goal to become a NATO member.<sup>8</sup> Will Russia seek to join again and what might the answer be this time?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Krupnick, Charles. *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 238.

<sup>9</sup> Steinfeld *Frihetens bitre tiår (Ten Bitter Years of Liberty)* 2001, 288.

## Chapter 1

The Cold War baggage caused continued tension

*From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.*

*-- Sir Winston Churchill*

This chapter focuses on Cold War history, and uses selected events of this era to set the stage for the discussion in the rest of the thesis. An understanding of the contextual issues is important in order to appreciate the very different views, methods and goals held by the two 'sides' and to be aware of the challenges that colored the political and security relationship between East and West. Russian relationship with the 'near-abroad' is of particular interests, since it is vital for the understanding of current and future challenges.

The Cold War was a period of continuous ideological competition between communism and capitalism that manifested itself in strong rhetoric and increased tension. The intention of this chapter is to show how perception, rhetoric and, behavior affected the tension during the Cold War, and continues to affect the relationship in the years after 1991.

### **Major events shaping the East – West relationship**

The Soviet Union concluded World War II as one of the victorious nations, as a major power, and aspired to be one of the leading nations in the world. The USSR contributions to defeat Hitler in World War II were significant and the human sacrifices the Soviet people suffered were

horrendous. Emerging not only as a major political and military factor, the USSR was the world's largest country, covering around one sixth of the Earth's landmass, including half of Europe and about two fifths of Asia.<sup>1</sup> The Soviets felt they had earned the right to be a major player in the world.

As the war ended the two largest players, who had been former allies, the USA and the Soviet Union, now sat on different sides of the 'iron curtain'. The two nations were geographically and ideology divided. There were the two dominating political systems after World War II, communism and capitalism. The defeat of Germany allowed old conflicts and ideological differences to take center stage and the Cold War grew colder with time.

New challenges came in quick order; one of the first in the form of the Berlin Blockade (1948-1949), where the USSR blocked all land and sea based transportation into Berlin. Many saw this as a prelude to an invasion into the western sector of Berlin. American forces in Berlin, totally outnumbered, readied themselves for a possible invasion. The invasion never came, but the tension was extreme. The Allies established a spectacularly successful air bridge, which supplied the city with all necessary supplies for more than a year.<sup>2</sup> The cooperation climate, however, continued to chill with the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949.

The USSR strongly opposed the establishment of NATO and relationships in Europe became increasingly tense.<sup>3</sup> The USSR's

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<sup>1</sup> Downloaded from History World Online, 3 February 2010; [http://www.history-world.org/union\\_of\\_soviet\\_socialist\\_republ.htm](http://www.history-world.org/union_of_soviet_socialist_republ.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Cherny, Andrei. *The Candy Bombers*. (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 2008), 3-4 and 543. The blockade lasted from June 1948 to May 1949, but the supply flights continued until September in order to stockpile supplies. The aircraft flew over 277,000 flights delivering some 4.6 billion pounds of supplies (food, coal etc) to Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> The USSR would eventually counter NATO with the 1955 Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance, otherwise known as the Warsaw Pact. Downloaded from *Soviet News*, No. 3165 (16 May 1955), pp. 1-2. 7 May 2010; from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955warsawpact.html>.

blockade of Berlin played a part in 'pushing' forward the establishment of the Alliance organization. The threat and aggression illustrated in the Berlin crisis worried the West.<sup>4</sup> The 'iron curtain' delineation became more and more visible and the original 12 member nations in NATO gradually increased their military forces in Europe. Nevertheless, the massive USSR conventional forces dwarfed the forces of the Alliance in Europe, and the result was a very tense atmosphere.<sup>5</sup>

Emerging nuclear capacity added to the threat, punctuated by the USSR announcement in 1949 that they had the atomic bomb.<sup>6</sup> On both sides along the 'iron curtain', there were hundreds of thousands of soldiers backed up by nuclear weapons. Due to the superior conventional forces on the USSR side, NATO backed its soldiers with a policy of "massive retaliation" to communist aggression.<sup>7</sup> The situation in Europe seemed to be a tinderbox just waiting to explode. The 'nuclear ghost' was always present, acting on one side as an added threat of annihilation, but it also had a sobering effect. The military situation was very unstable; in addition, in the political and economic realm, cooperation was no less volatile.

The European Recovery Act of 1948, better known as the Marshall Plan, was an initiative articulated by USA Secretary of State, George C. Marshall. Its goal was to restore European agricultural and industrial productivity after the war.<sup>8</sup> Extended to all of Europe, this much-needed

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<sup>4</sup> Whiteclay Chambers II, John. "'NATO.'" *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. *Encyclopedia.com*. 2000, 1. Downloaded 3 February 2010; <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O126-WarsawPact.html>.

<sup>5</sup> NATO. *NATO Handbook*. (Brussels: 2006), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Freedman, Lawrence. *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*. (Great Britain: CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne, 2003), 60.

<sup>7</sup> Freedman *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 73. Data also from NATO web page downloaded 7 May 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50068.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50068.htm). "During the Cold War, NATO's nuclear forces played a central role in the Alliance's strategy of flexible response. To deter major war in Europe, nuclear weapons were integrated into the whole of NATO's force structure, and the Alliance maintained a variety of targeting plans which could be executed at short notice."

<sup>8</sup> Downloaded from National Archives And Records Administration, 3 February 2010; [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured\\_documents/marshall\\_plan/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/marshall_plan/index.html).

program invited every nation to participate as long as they fulfilled certain economic cooperation demands.<sup>9</sup> The economic support from the Marshall plan lasted until 1951, distributing more than \$13 billion to the 16 participating countries.<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Stalin 'snubbed' the Marshall Plan and created instead bilateral trade treaties with the Eastern European states.<sup>11</sup> He saw the risk of losing control over commerce in the Eastern block and was afraid to show that the great USSR needed assistance. Stalin did not want to expose their needs to other countries, which could show that communism was inferior to capitalism; neither would he accept east-west trade, something that could ruin USSR plans to control Eastern Europe.

The tense relationship between the two powers extended beyond Europe. The Korean War (1950-1953), was the first hot war in the Cold War era and the first military clash between the two ideologies. The United States and its allies, with a United Nations mandate, fought to stop communist expansion on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>12</sup>

The Cold War changed in 1957 from a standoff and proxy conflict to a situation of more direct confrontation. The launch of Sputnik enabled the USSR to threaten the continental United States with nuclear weapons. The ability to launch an object into a space orbit is not the same as being able to guide an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) to its target.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the security establishment in the United States recognized the warning sign and felt the growing tension.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Downloaded from the Dodona Manor, the George C Marshall Center, 3 February 2010; [http://www.georgemarshall.org/GeorgeCMarshall/The\\_Marshall\\_Plan.asp](http://www.georgemarshall.org/GeorgeCMarshall/The_Marshall_Plan.asp).

<sup>10</sup> Downloaded from the Dodona Manor, the George C Marshall Center, 3 February 2010; [http://www.georgemarshall.org/GeorgeCMarshall/The\\_Marshall\\_Plan.asp](http://www.georgemarshall.org/GeorgeCMarshall/The_Marshall_Plan.asp).

<sup>11</sup> McDougall, Walter A. *The Heavens and the Earth, a Political History of the Space Age*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 52.

<sup>12</sup> Crane, Conrad C. *American Airpower Strategy in Korea 1950-1953*. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 9.

<sup>13</sup> McDougall, *The Heavens and the Earth, a Political History of the Space Age*., 63

<sup>14</sup> Dolman, Evertt C. *Astropolitik, Classical Geopolitics in the Space Age*. (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 175.



The 1960s and 70s brought a steady stream of tense episodes. A new crisis in Berlin in 1961 led to the building of the Berlin Wall and the infamous Cuban missile crisis in 1962 ensured that tensions remained high.<sup>15</sup> Many believed that the world had never been closer to nuclear war than with the Cuban crises in 1962. Despite these and other conflicts, there was a decline in East-West tension, and a less 'cold' period the last part of the 70s.

The less 'cold' period of the Cold War ended in 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> This aggression signaled a relapse to old style Soviet foreign policy, as seen earlier in Hungary, where the areas near the USSR deemed important and centrally controlled from Moscow. The invasion affected the East-West relationship and not only stopped the ratification of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II, but it resulted in more than 65 nations boycotting the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.<sup>17</sup> The 1980s continued with even more dramatic events.

One of the most dramatic, but peaceful events took place in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, which subsequently weakened the USSR's ability to project influence. The 'iron-curtain' lost some of its power, symbolized by opening of borders, and tearing down the Berlin Wall. The 'unstoppable' tidal wave of freedom seekers from the 'enclosed' Soviet Union started when Hungary opened its border to Austria on September 11, 1989.<sup>18</sup> It was impossible to stop the wave of people once it started, and this human flood gradually weakened Soviet control over the Eastern European countries.

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<sup>15</sup> Downloaded from The Global Security Org web page, 14 April 2010; <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/berlin.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Downloaded from the UN webpage, *UN General Assembly document (A/RES/37/37, 29 November 1983)* 11 February 2010: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/37/a37r037.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Downloaded from the U.S department of State office of the Historian, 11 February 2010; <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/qfp/104481.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Downloaded from the U.S history web page, 11 February 2010; <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1867.html>.

Several events in the 90's, particularly the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo strained the relationship between NATO and Russia. These events took place after the end of the Cold War, but they play an important part in describing the tension between the parties. While stress between East and West abated during the mid-1990s, tension increased again in 1999 with the Kosovo conflict.

There was strong Russian reaction on NATO's campaign in Kosovo. The much-debated NATO air campaign in Kosovo, which began in March 1999 without a United Nation (UN) authorization, caused President Boris Yeltsin to state, "NATO risked plunging the world into war...don't push us towards military action...and possibly world war."<sup>19</sup> Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, had declared that Russia would veto the use of force in Kosovo, if brought in for debate in the UN.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, on the question of what Russia would do if NATO did not take the case to the UN, Ivanov stated, "[w]e'll just make a lot of noise".<sup>21</sup> This was a watershed as Russia had no power to influence the decision and NATO could 'freely' execute the air campaign. During the Cold War, NATO and the Soviet Union had less freedom to maneuver, since it was vital to retain the sensitive balance of power. Now with a weakened Russia, this balance was less sensitive and NATO had more freedom to act.

After the ceasefire in Kosovo in June 1999, Russian ties to NATO were still very chilly, and cooperation was at a low point. Vladimir Baranovsky argued, "[T]he Kosovo phenomenon contributed more to the consolidation of Russian's anti-NATO stance than the whole vociferous campaign against the enlargement of NATO."<sup>22</sup> NATO had the possibility to operate more freely, but their actions still created a lot of tension.

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<sup>19</sup> Krupnick, Charles. *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*. (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 256.

<sup>20</sup> Henriksen, Dag. *NATO's Gamble*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 152.

<sup>21</sup> Henriksen *NATO's Gamble*, 152.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, Martin A. *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* (New York: Routhledge, 2006), 77.

The last few pages have highlighted several incidences where the tension and disagreement between the two blocks became quite apparent. Historically this tension has fluctuated, depending on the state of the security relationship between NATO and the USSR/Russia. At the height of the Cold War Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev spoke about the relationship.<sup>23</sup> He wanted to 'drive a wedge' between the United States and Europe. He stated, "Europe is our Common Home" and tried to make it a political delineation between 'them and us', where 'them' represented the United States and 'us' signified the USSR and Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Mikhail Gorbachev's 'perestroika' policy offered a new and different approach to the West; however, it retained a strong rhetorical element that followed the old style of Soviet policy against the West and NATO.<sup>25</sup> His statement "we would not like to see anyone kick in the doors of the European home and take the head of the table at *somebody else's apartment* [original emphasis]".<sup>26</sup> In his view, the United States did not belong in Europe. The USSR/Russia viewed Europe as part of their 'sphere of interests' and the United States as a competitor. The United States is the most important member in NATO, and any changes to the relationship between the United States and the rest of NATO will greatly affect the security situation in Europe.

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<sup>23</sup> Leonid Brezhnev was the forth General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, downloaded from Encyclopædia Britannica eb.com, 4 May 2010; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/79098/Leonid-Ilich-Brezhnev>.

<sup>24</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Perestroika; "from modest beginnings at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress in 1986, perestroika, Mikhail Gorbachev's program of economic, political, and social restructuring, became the unintended catalyst for dismantling what had taken nearly three-quarters of a century to erect: the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist totalitarian state." Downloaded from Library of Congress's Soviet Archives exhibit, 12 February 2010; <http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/soviet.exhibit/perest.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?*, 5.

### **Russian relationship with the ‘near abroad’**

Russia’s relationship with its ‘new’ neighbor states, after 1991, has been somewhat difficult and tense and has carried with it a lot of Cold War baggage. Stephen Covington has argued that Russia has been pursuing an ‘insecurity policy’ linked to its relationship with their former Soviet Union allies in the Warsaw Pact.<sup>27</sup> This ‘insecurity policy’ has its roots in the fear of western penetration and it serves as a method to keep these states closely tied to Russia. The former USSR republics form a “strategic corset” that might prevent the West from meddling directly with Russia.<sup>28</sup>

The Warsaw Pact collapse together with the USSR, but Russia tried to maintain a degree of control over the region.<sup>29</sup> When the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991, several former Soviet Union republics gained more freedom. Of the nations emerging from the collapsing USSR, Russia was the dominant nation. In 1991, based upon “state sovereignty” and the “principle of equality through coordinating,” Russia led the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). CIS intended to increase Russian influence and control over the former USSR republics, consequently enhancing Russia’s security.<sup>30</sup>

The ‘near-abroad’ occupies a significant position in determining how the future security relationship in Europe develops. Russian foreign

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<sup>27</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* 42. Data from the Warsaw Pact treaty downloaded 7 May 2010 from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955warsawpact.html> Members in the Warsaw Pact; the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Rumanian People's Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Czechoslovak Republic, 1 May 1955.

<sup>28</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* 42.

<sup>29</sup> Downloaded from Encyclopædia Britannica eb.com , 11 February 2010; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics>.

<sup>30</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* 43. Data also from CIC web page, downloaded 7 May 2010. Member nations in CIS: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.

policy, action and rhetoric, have caused some 'near abroad' nations to speak up and articulate their fear of increased interference from Russia. The newest NATO nations, all previous republics under Soviet control, now have a security system that will 'back them up' making them more free to express their dissatisfaction with Russia. The most vocal and sensitive nations are the Baltic nations. This tension will be challenging for NATO-Russia relationship in the future.<sup>31</sup>

The power struggle surrounding the 'near abroad' problem has fluctuated, and the political leadership in Russia has had different visions on this challenge. President Yeltsin appealed to the international community in 1993 for "Russian special powers as the guarantor of peace and stability in the former USSR".<sup>32</sup> Later President Vladimir Putin toned down this 'ownership' to the 'near abroad', and stated in 2004 that it is not a requirement that Russia always holds the leadership in CIS.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the 'near abroad' has remained a source of tension.

Among the 'near abroad' countries, Ukraine holds a particular position as both one of the largest former USSR republics and as one possessing a vital geostrategic position. Both NATO and Russia have sought to increase their influence with Ukraine, while Ukraine successfully has played both sides to gain advantages in its domestic and foreign policy agendas.<sup>34</sup> Ukraine maintains a strong Russian relationship through membership in CIS and trade agreements, while using its partnership with NATO as its "insurances policy".<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Krupnick *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* 46.

<sup>33</sup> Smith *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* 46.

<sup>34</sup> Krupnick *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*, 200-201.

<sup>35</sup> Krupnick *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*, 202.

Ukraine's security policy orientation in the coming years will greatly affect the security dynamic in the buffer zone. A further integration of Ukraine into NATO, or a stronger orientation towards Russia would have a huge impact on the stability in the region.

At the fall of the USSR, Ukraine was one of the world's three largest nuclear powers, and they voluntarily handed back weapons to Russia. The volunteer hand-over was a part of a Ukraine's 'buffer zone game', trading security and economy guarantees for signatures on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).<sup>36</sup> Any successful security solution must satisfy NATO, Russian and Ukrainian interests.

The freedom gained when the 'iron curtain' lifted had the bitter after-taste of continued East-West tension, rather than the forecasted reduction in tension. There are indications that NATO believed that their security problems would change for the better when the competing superpower, the Soviet Union, disappeared.<sup>37</sup> However, there seems to be more than enough security problems to keep NATO busy for a long time.

How can NATO best deal with this and ensure a prosperous and secure future for all parties? Whatever view subscribed to, these Cold War events were instrumental in building the perception between the two 'sides'. It is certain that the baggage from the Cold War colored (and still colors) the relationship between the USSR and NATO and can partly explain present day suspicion and distrust. The next chapter will analyze Russian perceptions of NATO and determine whether they see NATO as a threat.

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<sup>36</sup> Woodrow Wilson International Center, for Scholars. *Documents on the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, e-Dossier No. 4*. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Steinfeld, Hans-Wilhelm. *Frihetens bitre tiår (Ten Bitter Years of Liberty)*. (Oslo: Cappelen Publishing House, 2001), 253.

## Chapter 2

### Is NATO a threat? A Russian viewpoint

*This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be done otherwise.*

*-- Joseph Stalin in 1945*

This chapter enters into today's challenges between Russia and NATO, leaving the Cold War era as a backdrop. The intention of this chapter is to examine Russia has perceived military and political threats from NATO based upon available Russian and NATO documentations and data from Open Source Center.<sup>1</sup> It is challenging to differentiate between Russian rhetoric aimed at boosting internal morale and internal political goals, and 'real' rhetoric that signals changes affecting foreign policy.

NATO today, with its 28 sovereign member states, is a diverse organization trying to function with a decision-making system founded on consensus. There are different interests and political focus amongst the member states; particularly interesting are the differences between leading European members and the United States. This divergence is important to understand, when discussing threats from NATO, because it does not always act as a cohesive alliance.

Russia has criticized NATO, and in particular the United States, for acting without any consideration for Russian interest. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov denounced the United States for "unilateralism"

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<sup>1</sup> The DNI Open Source Center (OSC) serves as the hub of the Intelligence Community's National Open Source Enterprise. OSC collects and analyzes open source information from around the world and makes its products - ranging from textual translations to multimedia productions - available to customers throughout the United States Government. Downloaded from OSC webpage 13 February 2010; [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/community/about\\_osc/1023](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/community/about_osc/1023).

and for not extending “total equality” to Russia. Russia views the United States and NATO as two sides of the same coin and criticism towards the United States affects NATO. Russia’s perception of the United States affects their views of NATO.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, Russia’s Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Yuri V Ushakov stated, “[W]hat offends us is the view shared by some in Washington that Russia can be used when it is needed and discarded or even abused when it is not relevant to American objectives...we do require respect in order to build a two-way relationship.”<sup>3</sup> If these statements are representative, there is a danger that these views color Russia’s threat perception and views of NATO.

This chapter will first cover Russia’s perceived military threat from NATO before looking at the perception of a political threat from the Alliance. Material for both these parts comes from official documents, speeches, interviews, articles, and statements representing Russian perception.<sup>4</sup> Finally, a discussion based upon NATO’s official documents tries to analyze what Russia can ‘read’ or perceive from these documents.

### **Russian perception of a NATO military threat**

A concrete and fresh view into Russia's mindset came with their new Military Doctrine published in February 2010. The doctrine lists more than two pages worth of “threats” to the Russian Federation.<sup>5</sup> On

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<sup>2</sup> Blank, Stephen. *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*. (The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, Volume 21, Issue 3 July 2008, pages 491-526 3 July 2008), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Discussed in the chapter are three central Russian documents that cover threats as viewed in the military and political environment. These documents are the National Security Strategy, the Foreign Policy Concept and the Military Doctrine. The Russian National Security Strategy (NSS), like that in the United States, takes precedence over these other documents. NSS is broader in scope and covers many things beyond foreign relations, which the Russian government sees as possible threats or challenges to their security. NSS presents the President and his administration's view of the nation's security priorities (not just military priorities). The Foreign Policy Concept guides Russia’s international engagements. Russian Military Doctrine is similar to the United States National Defense Strategy. Data from e-mails (18 February 2010) with PhD Mark J. Conversino, the Dean of Academic Affairs at the United States Air War College.

<sup>5</sup> Russian Federation, President Dimitri Medvedev. *Newly Approved Russian Military Doctrine*. (Moscow; 10 February 2010), 2-4.



the number one spot, as the main external military danger, is NATO. Several other main points are linked to NATO or the United States, activity such as NATO expansion, deployment of troops to the 'near abroad', and the strategic missile defense system. Other commentary on the doctrine summed it up like this: "NATO is the main threat to Russia and [the doctrine] enshrines Moscow's right to a first nuclear attack".<sup>6</sup> Thus, the fundamental strategic planning document for the Russian federation holds NATO as the main threat.

The continuation of NATO as a military alliance causes concerns in Russia. A Russian White Paper from October 2003 stated that Russia expects all NATO nations to put an end to all their anti-Russia policy, and if NATO continues to remain an offensive military alliance, Russia must reassess their military strategy (including their nuclear strategy).<sup>7</sup> Is this 'empty talk' from a fallen superpower? Maybe, but it also indicates the concerns held by the leadership in Russia.<sup>8</sup>

NATO enlargement caused massive tension between East and West. For example, former USSR republics are now NATO members, relying on the former 'enemy' for their security. A look at pre- and post-1991 Europe shows two very different geopolitical situations and it is, therefore, possible to understand the Russian perception, especially as NATO's eastern flank gets closer and closer to Russia. The discussion on who joins NATO next must really annoy Russia and hurts its prestige. Another important factor in the post-1991 environment is NATO's 'out-of-area strategy'.

Russia perceives NATO's 'out-of-area strategy' as an attempt to expand the Alliance sphere of influence. NATO's original mission was the collective defense of its member nations' sovereign area, as described in

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<sup>6</sup> Bratislava Sme, Online. *From the Czech Republic to the Balkans, commentary on new Russian military doctrine*. (Bratislava, 16 February, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 5.

Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.<sup>9</sup> With the ‘out of area strategy’ NATO has expanded their interest to cover geographical areas outside member territory. NATO claims this is a natural development, which plays an important role in ensuring security for its members.<sup>10</sup> Russia, on the other hand, perceives it as a threat to their security and it weakens their ability to influence the ‘near-abroad’.

NATO’s involvement in ‘out-of-area’ operations started as early as in 1995 although, according to NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the first “truly” ‘out-of-area’ mission was Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> However, as discussed in the previous chapter, NATO’s intervention in the Balkans in 1995 was the real start of the ‘out-of-area strategy’. NATO has continued its engagement outside its core area and is now involved as far away as the Horn of Africa.<sup>12</sup>

It is evident that Russia perceives NATO’s ‘out-of-area strategy’ and its continuous enlargements as a military threat to Russia. As an example of this perception is President Vladimir Putin’s speech in 2006, where he worried about the bases that turned up along what he described as “our borders”.<sup>13</sup> These bases are in Romania and Poland, which no longer share a border with Russia. This is clear indication that

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<sup>9</sup> NATO’s area of operation covers more than the Europe and North America. Reference The North Atlantic Treaty, Article 6, downloaded from NATO’s web page, 29 April 2010; [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm). “For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack: On the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer; on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.”

<sup>10</sup> NATO operations and missions. Downloaded from NATO’s web page, 25 April 2010 from [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_52060.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52060.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Downloaded from NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 25 April 2010, <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=670>.

<sup>12</sup> Downloaded from NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 25 April 2010, <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=670>.

<sup>13</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 3.

Russia views this as their sphere of interests, and that NATO is infringing on it.

Missile defense systems are one of the more controversial issues between NATO and Russia the last few years. NATO is involved in three missile defense related activities: The Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence System (ALTBMD), Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) cooperation with Russia, and Missile Defence for the protection of NATO territory (NATO TMD). ALTBMMD intends to protect NATO troops in specific area against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, and the TMD is a NATO-Russian cooperation to study the interoperability of TBM systems.<sup>14</sup> The last missile related activity (NATO TMD) is the controversial one and the one that Russia perceives as being a threat.

The NATO TMD system has an initial goal of protecting NATO's territory, and the Allies foresee fielding a TMD system that can protect all of Europe including Russia. NATO recognized that the planned deployment of a European-based United States missile shield, would help protect NATO, and viewed it as an integral part of NATO-wide missile defense architecture.<sup>15</sup> The controversy appears to be associated with the bilateral agreements made between the United States and some 'near-abroad' nations. Russia objected very strongly to the proposed deployment of this missile defense system to Poland and the Czech Republic, which they perceive as an added threat. President Obama started his presidency by cancelling the deployment plans, and seen from Moscow this was a very popular decision. However, the decision was less popular in the affected nations, because the 'near-abroad' countries are seeking to boost their security.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Downloaded from NATO's web page, 25 April 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49635.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49635.htm).

<sup>15</sup> Downloaded from NATO's web page, 25 April 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49635.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49635.htm).

<sup>16</sup> The latest development in the missile shield case is that Poland and Romania will take part in the system, and Russia is worried that this will increase the military threat.

Russia perceives NATO as a military threat. The combined effect from the sheer existence of NATO, its continuous enlargement, its 'out-of-area strategy', and the intimidation from the proposed missile systems in Europe is in sum what frightens Russia. The continuing proliferation of these threats 'creeping' closer to their borders makes NATO the aggressor and sustains the Russian perception of NATO as a military threat.

### **Russian perception of a NATO political threat**

This section continues the discussion of Russian threat perception, but now viewed via a political lens. There is a close link between perceived threat in the political and military realms, but the perceived political threat is a wider phenomena and a more integrated part of Russian society. Therefore, the perceived political threats add tension to the already described military threats. The Russian elites' rhetoric is very revealing and shows that their perceptions of both the military and political threats rest on a foundation of a continuing feeling of inferiority, insecurity and fragility.

The consequence of the collapse of the USSR was a dramatic change in power and status for Moscow. In the former bi-polar world, the USSR was a major and an important player. After 1991, this power and status declined and with it, Russia's influence decreased. Russia's insecurity and lack of influence is fueling a strong need to reemerge as a prominent player. In addition, the insecurity triggers a 'self-defense mechanism' perceiving everything as a threat. This section looks more closely into the perceived political threat, as expressed by Russia.

As the new President, Dmitry Medvedev has signed off several updated policy documents, setting the principles and direction of Russia's foreign policy. Amongst them is the Russian Foreign Policy Concept. The Foreign Policy Concept tries to re-establish Russia's leading position in the world, focusing on how important its participation

in the UN Security Council, G8 and other international organizations are for the cooperation and well-being of the world.<sup>17</sup> NATO is not one of the mentioned organizations, because Russia views its influence in this organization as minimal. Therefore, Russia seeks to increase its influence via other organizations.

Russia is unenthusiastic in its dealing with NATO as an organization, but tries instead to establish bilateral relationships with the European NATO nations. By seeking the bilateral route, Russia avoids doing business with NATO as an entity. Russia will then appear to be the stronger part and its influence greater. This approach ensures that NATO cannot use its collective 'power' and dominate Russia. This bilateral activity is particularly evident in energy-deals between Russia and several leading European countries.<sup>18</sup>

Similar to the new Military Doctrine, the Foreign Policy Concept for the political side lists NATO as a threat. The Foreign Policy Concept reflects Russian political attitudes and is the document that gives guidance from the leadership to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The concept restates Russia's "negative attitude towards NATO expansion, and the continuing policy of bringing NATO installations closer to Russian borders".<sup>19</sup>

Another document that describes the political relationship with NATO is the New National Security Strategy, signed by President Medvedev 12 May 2009. This National Security Strategy is an independent document, similar in content, but covers a broader spectrum of Russian policy than the two previously discussed documents (Foreign Policy Concept and the Military Doctrine). It quite explicitly

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<sup>17</sup> Downloaded from the Russian Government web page, 2 February 2010  
<http://www.gov.ru/index.html> *New Russian Foreign Policy Concept*. 2008, 2.

<sup>18</sup> For a further discussion on energy, see chapter 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Russian Foreign Policy Concept*, 13.

declares NATO a threat to international security, “especially in the Euro-Atlantic Region”.<sup>20</sup>

Russia is sensitive and on ‘alert’ for any influence that can affect its security and authority. Their insecurity shows when they discuss new types of warfare such as information or network war.<sup>21</sup> For example, Russia accused hostile media in the West of constantly criticizing President Putin and their allies. According to a leading Russian official, there is no doubt in Russia that this is an organized campaign led by the United States and NATO to weaken Russia influence in the ‘near abroad’.<sup>22</sup> There is a preponderance of evidence that Russia feels inferior in its relationship with NATO and, in particular, with the United States.

For Russia this ‘new warfare’ situation represents more than propaganda, because they fear information warfare can win wars without resorting to force. Russia sees a close connection between information warfare and the USSR’s implosion. When the USSR collapsed, even their large nuclear forces could not save them. This showed how important factors other than weapons were, and Russia is adamant that it will not fall into the same trap as the USSR did in 1991.<sup>23</sup>

Russia’s relative lack of power and status has created a situation where they feel politically inferior to NATO. Due to their insecurity, Russia perceives nearly all political interactions with NATO as being threatening. Exacerbating Russian insecurities are many of NATO’s documents that Russia’s policymakers believe threaten their country.

### **Russian perception of threats from NATO’s central documents**

The previous sections discussed perceived military and political threats from a Russian point of view. The next section will analyze

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<sup>20</sup> Russian Federation Presidential, Edict. *Russian Federation National Security Strategy until 2020*. (Moscow; 12 May 2009), 3 and 9.

<sup>21</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Blank *Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment*, 9.

NATO's official documents and analyze if they contain any political or military threats towards Russia. As seen in the two previous sections, Russia's low self-esteem is a major factor contributing to its threat perception. Russia will perceive any negative indications towards Russia in these documents, as a threat.

The text in the North Atlantic Treaty offers typical diplomatic language that indicates no particular enemy and threatens no one.<sup>24</sup> The treaty text keeps all options open and describes no adversaries in particular. It lists NATO's main role as "to deter and defend against any threat of aggression against any NATO member state as provided for in Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty".<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, "the Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all".<sup>26</sup> However, in 1949 everybody knew who the enemy was and where an attack might come from. There was, therefore, no need to state explicitly who the enemy was in the text.

Russians perceive NATO's Strategic Concept as threatening. Section 36 and 37 in the current Concept specifically mentioned Russia and its importance in a "commitment to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe".<sup>27</sup> However, Russia is probably not striving for an "undivided" Europe. Russia can interpret this text along the lines that NATO wants to take over Europe (both East and West). Although the Concept does not describing Russia as a threat, there are several indicators pointing towards Russia as a potential security problem.

Finally, the NATO handbook last updated in 2006, offers some additional insight in the Alliance focus. NATO's commitment is not only on defense, but also to "peace and stability of the wider Euro-Atlantic

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<sup>24</sup> NATO, from NATO's web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>. *The North Atlantic Treaty*. (Washington D.C. 4 April 1949)

<sup>25</sup> NATO, from NATO's web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>. *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, 24 April 1999.

<sup>26</sup> NATO, *The North Atlantic Treaty*.

<sup>27</sup> NATO, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, section 36 and 37.

area.”<sup>28</sup> Russia could perceive the Alliance mission as trying to influence all aspects of European life.<sup>29</sup>

There is little doubt that NATO and Russia have come a long way and that their relationship is significantly better than during the Cold War. However, many Russians ask why NATO still exists. If NATO saw no threat to their member nations, there would have been no need for this organization. Nonetheless, NATO does exist and Russia must cope with what it perceives as a military and political threat. The main question for an improved relationship is if NATO will continue its work for security in Europe together with Russia, or at least “with an eye to Russia”.<sup>30</sup>

Russia’s low self-esteem possibly leads to perceiving most factors as a threat. The combined effect of perceived military and political threats has increased the tension between NATO and Russia. NATO is creeping closer to Russia’s borders, and NATO’s ‘out-of-area strategy’ adds to this tension. The commitment NATO made with its enlargement process, created a momentum, which is irreversible, and Russia has to deal with it. These factors combined with the perceived feeling of insecurity and inferiority towards NATO creates a near paranoid fear from Russia.

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<sup>28</sup> NATO, from NATO’s web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>. *NATO Handbook*. (Brussels: NATO, 2006), 18.

<sup>29</sup> *NATO Handbook*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> Trenin, Dmitri. *NATO’S new Strategic Concept – A few thoughts related to Russia*. 2009, 3.



### Chapter 3, Is NATO a good neighbor?

*Those who can win a war well can rarely make a good peace  
and those who could make a good peace would never have  
won the war.*

*-- Sir Winston Churchill*

The discussion in the previous chapter focused on perceived threats from NATO, this chapter will focus on what utility NATO can offer Russia. It takes a more positive approach to the evaluation, in order to discuss the benefits, rather than the perceived threats from NATO. This thesis has already discussed some of the constraints affecting the ability to create a fertile cooperation between NATO and Russia. One constraint is the Cold War baggage, which colors both Russia's and NATO's opinion. Another is that the last decade of interaction has not done enough to build a trustworthy relationship. Russians operate under severe self-established constraints, where they think it is not possible to cooperate with the former Cold War enemy; added to this is their insecurity and feeling of inferiority. All of these constraints result in a very suspicious approach to everything NATO does, no matter what the real intentions are.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these constraints, Russia and NATO will continue to co-exist in a constantly evolving security environment; it is therefore important to look at what NATO can offer. This chapter has two sections, the first covering the perceived benefit Russia can gain from NATO, where the focus is on NATO as a stability provider to Russia. The second section covers what NATO officially is offering Russia, in form of promises in NATO documentation.

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<sup>1</sup> Legvold, Robert. *The Russian File; How to Move Toward a Strategic Partnership*. Foreign Affairs. (New York: July-August 2009 Vol. 88 Iss 4), 3.

### **The view from Moscow: what NATO can offer**

It was much harder to identify areas where Russia was positive and focused on seeking benefits from a relationship with NATO, than it was to find the threatening factors. The previous listed constraints hamper the current cooperation atmosphere between Russia and NATO, leading to a predominate negative Russian view on NATO

The main question is can Russia see past the Cold War baggage and adopt a reformed perception of NATO, were they are seeking the benefits from the relationship, rather than focusing only on the threats? As discussed in the previous chapter, central Russian documents still list NATO as a threat.

Stability is a key enabler for Russia to ensure they are capable to move forward with other internal and external challenges.<sup>2</sup> NATO can provide Russia with increased stability in several ways and there are some key areas that stand out when examining the Russian-NATO relationship. Both sides can achieve increased stability via cooperation with a NATO organization that is diverse enough to understand Russian interests or, via the economic interwoven relationship with the European NATO nations (or any combination of these two). The following section will cover each of these elements, in order to discuss what NATO can offer.

NATO with its 28 members is very diverse and their policies are varied enough to encompass Russian interests. NATO is one organization, but it consists of many sovereign members, each with somewhat diverse political views. Russia can benefit from an organization that has the willingness and ability to understand Russian interests. This section does not advocate any form of reorganizing of NATO, but rather identifies that different political views and a multi-faceted understanding of Russia's challenges benefits Russia.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4 for a discussion on Russian challenges.

The enlargement process proves there are elements in NATO that consider the balance in Europe and the relationship with Russia as very sensitive. NATO can offer Russia an organization that shares some of their sensitivity regarding the enlargement process and the 'near-abroad' challenge.

As an example with regard to NATO's diversity, a brief look at the last Membership Action Plan (MAP) process can be illuminating. At the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, there was a thrust to extend the MAP to Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>3</sup> Chancellor of Germany, Angela Dorothea Merkel, strongly opposed this suggestion and this strong pressure stopped the MAP offer. Enlarging NATO this close to Russia was foolish, according to Germany. With Ukraine as a MAP member, NATO would have a 'foothold' less than a 4-hour car journey from Red Square.<sup>4</sup> The result of a more restrictive enlargement policy was that Russia avoided another blow to its security zone and interests. In this case, NATO offered a solution that stabilized the region and benefited Russia.

The interwoven economic relationship is an area where NATO can offer Russia added benefits.<sup>5</sup> A significant number of NATO members are also members in the EU.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, these nations will normally advocate the same security interests in NATO as in the EU, effectively the areas that are important for the EU, will automatically be important for NATO. The energy sector is an extremely sensitive area that ties Russia and NATO together. Russia supplies a significant portion of Europe's energy (oil and gas) consumption, having direct implications on these

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<sup>3</sup> NATO, from NATO's web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm> Summit Guide 2009, 32 describe Membership Action Plan (MAP) mechanism is the stage in the procedure for nations wishing to join where the current members review their formal applications. Data also from; Steinfeld, Hans-Wilhelm. *Frihetens bitre tiår (Ten Bitter Years of Liberty)*. (Oslo: Cappelen Publishing House, 2001), 172.

<sup>4</sup> Steinfeld *Frihetens bitre tiår (Ten Bitter Years of Liberty)*, 172.

<sup>5</sup> This paper further examines energy interdependency in chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> Archick, Kristin and Gallis, Paul. *NATO and the European Union*. CRS Report for Congress Received through the CRS Web, <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RL32342.pdf>. Jan 4, 2005, 23. There are 28 NATO members and 27 EU members, with a membership correlation of more than 80%.

nations' relationship.<sup>7</sup> This argument links to the stability argument discussed earlier, and stability in the form of a reliable trading partner in the European NATO nations will significantly affect Russia. European NATO nations can offer increased stability and transparency as a reliable trading partner.

This Russian-NATO energy relationship is similar to the ideas behind what now is the EU. The belief was that a close and interconnected trade and production relationship would prevent future wars between the participants.<sup>8</sup> An integrated energy trade stimulates improved cooperation and impacts positively on stability and the security environment.

Russia, as a main energy supplier, is very dependent on secure trade routes. The piracy problem outside Somalia affects Russia and NATO. A greater cooperation with NATO would enable a more powerful protection of these trade routes, which Russia is highly dependent on. A better security of these routes, mean better energy security, which will provide mutual benefits for both the seller and the buyer, affecting both Russia and NATO. NATO can offer Russia this increased security.<sup>9</sup>

As long as NATO has existed, its members have benefitted from the stability and security the Alliance provide. NATO's stability framework in Western, Central and lately in Eastern Europe has enabled a secure and prosperous development to take place in Europe after the end of the Cold

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<sup>7</sup> INSS, Institute for National Strategic Studies. *Global Strategic Assessment 2009*. Annual, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2009), 78 and data downloaded 21 February 2010 from EurActive.net; <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/geopolitics-eu-energy-supply/article-142665>. In addition, data comes from The Oil Drum webpage at <http://www.theoil Drum.com/node/3283> downloaded 18 February 2010, and from EU Energy Policy Blog: <http://www.energypolicyblog.com/2008/11/18/how-dependent-is-europe-on-russian-gas/>. According to Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), the EU depends heavily on Russian energy deliverance. INSS data estimates that Russia supplies nearly 50 percent of the EU daily oil consumption, and around 40 percent of the total EU consumption of gas.

<sup>8</sup> Downloaded 27 April 2010, from EU webpage regarding EU history; [http://europa.eu/abc/history/1945-1959/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/history/1945-1959/index_en.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Downloaded 9 May 2010 from; [http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2009/20090000\\_cscp\\_artikel\\_mhaas.pdf](http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2009/20090000_cscp_artikel_mhaas.pdf).

War.<sup>10</sup> Russia needs to improve its security and stability situation, in order to move forward with its future challenges.<sup>11</sup> Kurt Volker, the United States Ambassador to NATO put it this way: “[w]e want to have a productive, cooperative relationship with Russia – both bilaterally, and through NATO. We genuinely believe that NATO and Russia have many common interests, and should work together to address them.”<sup>12</sup>

A Russia more closely integrated with NATO “means integration and interdependence in the broadest possible sense ideological, institutional, and economic. The bigger the alliance becomes, the less is the burden on any single state and the greater the security it provides.”<sup>13</sup> The solution that NATO can offer Russia is assistance with providing security and stability.<sup>14</sup>

NATO can offer Russia stability, something that is necessary to underpin all other activity. Without stability, Russia cannot begin to deal with its other and possibly more pressing challenges.<sup>15</sup> NATO is not a homogeneous group of nations and, as seen with the enlargement issue, there are nations inside NATO that can act as moderators and be sensitive enough to deal with Russian ‘near-abroad’ interests. Furthermore, Russia and NATO have a lot in common where an intertwined relationship, particularly related to energy, which creates a relationship based on interdependence and increases the stability in the

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<sup>10</sup> From Der Spiegel, article by *Volker Rühle, Klaus Naumann, Frank Elbe and Ulrich Weisser*. Downloaded 9 May 2010 from; <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,682287,00.html>.

<sup>11</sup> See chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion on Russian challenges.

<sup>12</sup> Kurt Volker, U.S. Ambassador to NATO at Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute, (Oslo: Norway, August 21, 2008) Downloaded 9 May 2010 from; <http://norway.usembassy.gov/volkernupi2.html>.

<sup>13</sup> *Russia, NATO, and the Future of U.S.-Chinese Relations*, by Bruce Russett and Allan Stam. (New Haven, CT: Political Science Department, Yale University, 1997). Downloaded 9 May 2010 from; [http://www.fas.org/man/nato/ceern/nato-final\\_vs.htm](http://www.fas.org/man/nato/ceern/nato-final_vs.htm)

<sup>14</sup> From Der Spiegel, article by *Volker Rühle, Klaus Naumann, Frank Elbe and Ulrich Weisser*. Downloaded 9 May 2010 from; <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,682287,00.html>.

<sup>15</sup> See chapter 4 for more details on Russian challenges.

region. The next section looks at NATO's documents examining what they can offer Russia.

### **What can NATO offer, as described in the Alliance central documents?**

The last section discussed the Russian perception on what NATO can offer and the utility Russia can gain from the Alliance. This section will discuss NATO official documents and policy, to identify areas where NATO offers Russia something beneficial. This section will rely mostly on documents related to the NATO-Russia Council and NATO Summit. NATO offers a framework for cooperation with Russia, and one of its central document's main message is "development based on common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Alliance has striven since its inception to secure a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe."<sup>16</sup>

NATO reaffirmed its commitment for a continued and an enhanced relationship with Russia at the 2009 NATO Summit. This is one of the most recent reiterations of a NATO wish for a strong and collaborative partnership with Russia, and it continues by stating that NATO is ready to cooperate with Russia to tackle the common security challenges facing them. The goal of this partnership is to promote security in the Euro-Atlantic area and, according to the Summit declaration NATO remains committed to this partnership.<sup>17</sup>

The Summit statement from 2009 focuses on the importance of maintaining a dialog and the common values NATO and Russia share. Upholding an active channel of communication between NATO and

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<sup>16</sup> NATO. From NATO's web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm> *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*. 24 April 1999, part I section 6.

<sup>17</sup> NATO, From NATO's web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm> From the 2009 Summit in Strasbourg, France / Kehl, Germany 3-4 April 2009 *PR/CP(2009)043 - Declaration on Alliance Security*; downloaded 28 April 2010; <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2009/0904-summit/index.html>.

Russia is important for dealing effectively with shared security challenges. The 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act and the 2002 Rome Declaration regulate the principles for the relationship between NATO and Russia, and the relationship depends on mutual trust. Russia has here several concrete written promises and venues that facilitate cooperation where mutual benefits are the main goal.<sup>18</sup>

The Russian attack on Georgia in August 2008 caused a setback in NATO-Russian cooperation, but its importance remains. Despite strong protest condemning the Russian attack, NATO continues to view Russia as a particularly important partner and neighbor. “NATO and Russia share common security interests, such as the stabilization of Afghanistan; arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of WMD, including their means of delivery; crisis management; counter-terrorism; counter-narcotics; and anti-piracy.”<sup>19</sup> From NATO’s point of view and its documents, there are many areas where Russia can benefit from cooperation with the Alliance.<sup>20</sup>

One tangible example of this type of cooperation is the ongoing project between NATO and Russia on interoperability of defense systems. In 2003, the NRC launched a study to evaluate interoperability issues and investigate the potential to link Russian and NATO defense systems together. The focus for this project is on one of the three previously mentioned missile projects NATO is assessing – Theatre Missile Defense cooperation with Russia. A link between these systems would create a very close basis for cooperation and would mean sharing information and sensitive intelligence data. NATO has allocated more than three million

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<sup>18</sup> NATO. *From the 2009 Summit in Strasbourg, France / Kehl, Germany* PR/CP(2009)044 - Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration, downloaded 28 April 2010; <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2009/0904-summit/index.html>.

<sup>19</sup> NATO. *From the 2009 Summit in Strasbourg, France / Kehl, Germany* PR/CP(2009)044 - Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration.

<sup>20</sup> NATO. *From the 2009 Summit in Strasbourg, France / Kehl, Germany* PR/CP(2009)044 - Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration.

Euros to this study as of April 2009.<sup>21</sup> A continuation of this study and a possible further expansion of TBM cooperation with NATO would be beneficial for Russia in several areas like security, economic, education and research.

According to NATO documents, NATO and Russia have not been enemies since the Cold War. Documentation from the NATO-Russia Founding Act clearly states, “NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries. They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation.”<sup>22</sup> However, as discussed earlier, NATO-Russia’s fluctuating relationship after the Cold War has caused instances of animosity, and the relationship has sometimes been quite cold. Regardless of these disagreements, NATO does not regard Russia as an enemy. Even when Russian military action in Georgia in 2008 instigated a stop in the NRC meetings, NATO did not intend to terminate the cooperation with Russia, but rather convey a signal to them.<sup>23</sup>

The NATO – Russia relationship is back on track after the Georgian ‘crisis’, with a promising vision for the future. At a NRC meeting in December 2009 the NRC Chairman stated the “[a] trusting, productive NATO-Russia relationship is important not just for European security, but indeed for global security”. NATO views Russia as a very central player and partner in the process of increasing stability and enhancing the security in Europe. NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen made this very clear with this statement observing, “[o]ur goal should be to build a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia, based on trust, shared views and shared goals. That may not be

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<sup>21</sup> NATO web page on Missile Defence. Downloaded 1 February 2010; [http://www.nato.int/issues/missile\\_defence/index.html](http://www.nato.int/issues/missile_defence/index.html).

<sup>22</sup> NATO. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>. *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France*. Paris, 27 May 1997.

<sup>23</sup> Downloaded from NRC web page 29 April 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50091.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50091.htm).



for tomorrow – but today’s meeting will be an important step in the right direction.”<sup>24</sup> NATO is offering Russia an equal relationship in the security development of Europe.

The text of the North Atlantic Treaty and other central NATO documents contains no formal hindrance for a closer cooperation with Russia. The NATO members and their security policy are part of defining what NATO has become. If something is important for the member nations, it is automatically important for NATO as an organization. This flexibility has been NATO’s key to adapting to changing security challenges.

NATO is a multifaceted organization that deals with more than defense. At the last seminar in the process of developing NATO’s new Strategic Concept, NATO’s Secretary General stated: “We need to reform the three fundamental elements of our modus operandi: the way we do our traditional business, the way we address new threats, and last but definitely not least, our structure and organization.”<sup>25</sup> Russia’s cooperation with NATO via NRC and the willingness of NATO to transform can offer opportunities for a development that benefits Russia.

NATO represents 28 different nations’ values as well as a method of burden sharing regarding the ‘costs’ of creating a secure environment for the member states. Prior to becoming a NATO member, a potential candidate need to meet certain requirements, NATO can therefore be a driver for political reforms.<sup>26</sup> However, the most significant part of NATO is its ability to create stability for its members, something that makes the organization attractive even today.<sup>27</sup> Russia need stability and

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<sup>24</sup> From the NRC meeting 4 December 2009, downloaded 9 May 2010 from; [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-96BA940C-12A59062/natolive/news\\_59970.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-96BA940C-12A59062/natolive/news_59970.htm?)

<sup>25</sup> Meeting in Washington 23 February 2010, downloaded 29 April 2010; [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_61708.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_61708.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>26</sup> NATO. Downloaded 29 April 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_37356.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37356.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Sloan, Stanley R. *NATO, the European Union and the Atlantic community; Transatlantic Bargain Challenged*. (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005), 3-11.

predictability to develop further, therefore NATO might be a good neighbor for Russia after all.

In December 2009, Fogh Rasmussen said, "Let me make a very clear statement as Secretary General of NATO: NATO will never attack Russia. Never. And we don't think Russia will attack us. We have stopped worrying about this and Russia should stop worrying about us as well."<sup>28</sup> This statement is very clear; however, does Russia believe it?

Russia performs a difficult balancing act, where NATO is both a threat and an important provider of stability. Russia still lists NATO as a threat in its guiding documents, but see benefits from the ability NATO has as a security and stability provider. As discussed, a more sensitive NATO, has understood that the 'near-abroad' must be treated with care, this understanding together with the intertwined economic relationship can create the stability Russia need to move forward.

NATO recognized early that Russia would be a critical component in building a secure environment for Europe. There are no formal hindrances for a much closer relationship with Russia, or even a NATO membership. The way forward would be to capitalize on the possibilities and opportunities from this longstanding cooperation. With NRC as a basis, they can continue to development this relationship, which is essential for both parties and their overall security environment. With NATO as the provider of increased stability and as strategic partner, Russia should stops viewing NATO as a threat and move forward with an increased cooperation based upon common shared values and equal partnership.

Both Russia and NATO, see benefits in an increased interaction, but there are still significant differences in opinion on how to achieve this. The next chapter focuses on Russian future challenges. These

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<sup>28</sup> Press TV, Iranian International News Network. Downloaded 9 May 2010 from; <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=113986&sectionid=351020602>.

challenges can force Russia to seek closer to NATO and become reliant on its ability to provide stability, rather than listing NATO as a threat.

## Chapter 4

Does Russia have other and more substantial problems than NATO?

*One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger and try to run away from it. If you do that, you will double the danger. But, if you meet it promptly and without flinching, you will reduce the danger by half. Never run away from anything. Never!*

*-- Sir Winston Churchill*

The previous chapters have focused on the historical and current relationship between Russia and NATO, where their acts and rhetoric appear to indicate that this relationship is the most pressing security challenge facing them. These earlier chapters have focused on how Cold War baggage colored interaction and created a certain perception (from both sides) of the relationship. Furthermore, these chapters also looked at the threat NATO constituted, as perceived by Russia, and what NATO could offer Russia.

This chapter will explore some of Russia's other and possibly more substantial challenges. Its focus moves away from the Alliance and discusses a wider spectrum of challenges. The intent is to show that these other challenges are considerable and that it is more important for Russia to focus on these, rather than a possible threat from NATO. As a basis for further discussion, a recent assessment from President Medvedev will set the stage for Russia's current state of affairs. His open and candid evaluation is a valuable insight and relevant point of departure for the rest of this chapter. Broadly speaking, President Medvedev's assessment of Russia's challenges focuses on three areas: the economy, demographic issues and the challenge from the 'near abroad'; the rest of this chapter will focus the discussion around these three areas.

### **President Medvedev's assessment of Russia's situation**

President Medvedev provided in 2009 an assessment on Russia's state of affairs, and the challenges that face the nation in the coming years. In an interview with the Italian newspaper 'Girodivite', President Medvedev sums up Russia's challenges this way: "an inefficient economy, semi-Soviet social sphere, fragile democracy, negative demographic trends, and unstable Caucasus represent very big problems, even for a country such as Russia". However, it is not all bad, and Russia has progressed greatly compared to ten years ago.<sup>1</sup> He concludes, reflecting on Russia's position: "Russia is one of the world's leading economies, a nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council."<sup>2</sup> Russia's challenges need attention, and a possible threat from NATO should probably be lower on the priority list.

According to the President, Russia must address several factors to foster progress and move into the future. In the interview, President Medvedev states that Russia must "liberate our country from persistent social ills."<sup>3</sup> These ills are indicative of a long tradition of economic backwardness relying heavily on export of raw materials, a habit of corruption on all levels, and a "paternalistic attitude" leading to an overreliance on the government.<sup>4</sup> Russians need to tackle these challenges; they could soar if not acted on. The President sees these factors as threats and states "[w]e should get rid of them by using the strongest terms."<sup>5</sup>

Russia's economy, which is highly dependent on the energy market, has declined and Russia's purchasing power has dropped.

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<sup>1</sup> Gentile, Emanuele. *Dmitry Medvedev's Article, Go Russia!* From the Italian Newspaper *GIRODIVITE*, 11 September 2009, 2. Interview with President Medvedev 11 September 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Gentile. *Dmitry Medvedev's Article, Go Russia!* 7.

<sup>3</sup> Gentile. *Dmitry Medvedev's Article, Go Russia!* 3.

<sup>4</sup> Gentile. *Dmitry Medvedev's Article, Go Russia!* 3. Paternalistic attitude; here describing a system where the population expects the state to take care of them. <http://www.db.dk/bh/core%20concepts%20in%20lis/articles%20a-z/paternalism.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Gentile. *Dmitry Medvedev's Article, Go Russia!* 3.

Russia is a significant oil and gas exporter; therefore, its economy is very price sensitive to price changes in these commodities. Lower prices resulted in Russia's purchasing power parity (PPP) dropping the last three years.<sup>6</sup> There are obvious pitfalls relying on one or a few products for economic progress, not only for economical development, but also for a lack of diversity that can affect national security. Russia is a large country and rich in raw materials, but still poor economically. Despite all of its oil and gas natural resources, Russia's economy is only 3 percent of the world economy.<sup>7</sup>

Russia has a challenging demographic trend, and the President sees this as a focus area. Currently Russia has a population of 140 million people, predicted to decline to around 110 million by 2050.<sup>8</sup> Not only in this interview is the negative demographic trend worrying the President, but also the new Security Strategy requires a higher focus on this growing problem.<sup>9</sup> Problems like alcoholism, poor medical care and high death rates send the Russian population spiraling downwards. There are some indications that President Medvedev recognizes these problems as capable of overtaking more traditional security challenges, usually associated with military threats.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Downloaded from CIA Fact Book 21 February 2010; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html?countryName=Russia&countryCode=rs&regionCode=cas&rank=9#rs>. There can be many other factors contributing to a drop in PPP, but the dominant energy sector would have an equally dominating impact on the economy. PPP data is from 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Stubb, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander. Speech titled; "Why was the Russia Forum founded?" 26 November 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Downloaded from CIA fact book 11 May 2010; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>. Additional data from General Naumann, General Shalikashvili, Field Marshal The Lord Inge, Admiral Lanxade, General van den Breemen, Bilski, Murray. *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World*. 2007 from Center for Strategic International Studies, 33

<sup>9</sup> Morales, Javier. *Russia's New National Security Strategy: Towards a 'Medvedev Doctrine'?* 25 September 2009, 4. Downloaded 2 February 2010 from [http://www.europesworld.org/NewEnglish/Home\\_old/PartnerPosts/tabid/671/PostID/824/Default.aspx](http://www.europesworld.org/NewEnglish/Home_old/PartnerPosts/tabid/671/PostID/824/Default.aspx).

<sup>10</sup> Gentile Dmitry Medvedev's Article, *Go Russia!* 6.

The ‘near-abroad’ and Russia’s challenges associated with the areas surrounding them, is threatening their prestige and security. President Medvedev focuses on challenges related to, what he labels the “Russian democratic model”.<sup>11</sup> This model encompasses the ability to “maintain a balanced world order” and protecting small nations, as seen in South Ossetia.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that Russian democracy will not “merely copy foreign models.”<sup>13</sup> Medvedev wants to change Russia, but these changes must happen on Russian terms. The geographical areas close to Russia will be central factors in this development and Russia wants minimal outside interference. The next sections take a closer look at these challenges related to the Russian economy, demographics and the ‘near-abroad’.

### **Economic related challenges**

Russia is too dependent on its raw material based economy, and it struggles with corruption and a lack of innovation, all which slows down their economic prosperity. Russia’s economy is comparable to many developing countries, where their main source of income comes from a very limited number of raw materials.<sup>14</sup> Russia’s focus on the economy creates an impression that they try to solve all their problems through financial means. The new Security Strategy presents a short checklist providing “the Primary Characteristics of the Conditions of National Security.” In the checklist, five of the total seven characteristics are

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<sup>11</sup> Gentile *Dmitry Medvedev’s Article, Go Russia!* 5.

<sup>12</sup> Gentile *Dmitry Medvedev’s Article, Go Russia!* 7. South Ossetia; Russia views the President Saakashvili’s attack into this area as a criminal and unlawful act.

<sup>13</sup> Gentile *Dmitry Medvedev’s Article, Go Russia!* 5.

<sup>14</sup> “Russia was in 2009 the world’s largest exporter of natural gas, the second largest exporter of oil, and the third largest exporter of steel and primary aluminum. This reliance on commodity exports makes Russia vulnerable to boom and bust cycles that follow the highly volatile swings in global commodity prices.” Downloaded 11 May 2010 from CIA fact book; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

economic related, which is a clear indication of where Russia's focus will be towards 2020.<sup>15</sup>

Russia's energy trade with EU is their main financial resource, but also possibly Russia's biggest problem too. The EU has gradually diversified their supply chain to avoid being too reliant on one supplier of energy. Despite these changes, close to half of the EU's energy consumption originates in Russia. On the other side, Russia is extremely dependent on the EU as a customer. The EU buys 60 percent of Russia's gas and any change in this relationship would have dramatic consequences for Russia's financial situation.<sup>16</sup> This interdependence makes both parties quite vulnerable and there is very little motivation to upset this fine balance. Russia's overreliance on few raw materials, particularly on oil and gas, is one of the challenges it needs to address.

Innovation deficit and a paternalistic attitude affect Russian development and it is a very real problem for Russia. Old style communist management and excessive governmental control take a long time to turn around. After decades of getting used to the state organizing one's life, it takes away a lot of one's incentive to be creative; a high reliance on the government makes individuals less important. President Medvedev states that striving for "personal success is not one of our national habits."<sup>17</sup> Despite Medvedev's desire to change, the state still has a firm hold over the economy. In a command style economy, there is little room for entrepreneurs.<sup>18</sup> Productivity measurements indicate that Russia is far behind Europe. Data coming from the economic department of the oil giant Yukos indicates that Russian productivity is

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<sup>15</sup> Russian Federation Presidential, Edict. *Russian Federation National Security Strategy until 2020*. 12 May 2009, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Stubb "Why was the Russia Forum founded?"

<sup>17</sup> Gentile Dmitry Medvedev's Article, *Go Russia!* 3.

<sup>18</sup> Stubb "Why was the Russia Forum founded?"



approximately 30 times lower than that found in North Western Europe.<sup>19</sup>

Closely linked to an excessive governmental presence is corruption. Payments to governmental officials became the norm in order to make something happen. Russia is Europe's most corrupt nation, and ranked number 146 on the Corruption Perception Index.<sup>20</sup> It shares this position with several nations, amongst them Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. This is the wrong company for Russia. For a nation aspiring to develop into a prestigious international nation again, this area needs repair.<sup>21</sup> Russia will struggle to attract foreign investment if the perception is that its system is not trustworthy, something a 146-corruption ranking perpetuates. The shift from communism to capitalism is proving a very painful process.<sup>22</sup>

Russia wants to meet many of its challenges with economic development as the medicine. However, the problems related to a highly volatile, single raw material-based economy, hampered by the lack of innovation and creativity, topped by widespread corruption indicates that Russia has a long way to go, and it might not be able to rely on a strong economy alone to 'pull' itself out of current and future problems.

### **Demographic challenges**

The most important resource for a nation is its people and the knowledge and skills they provide for their country. Russia has a grim population prediction for the coming decades, which threatens to leave several parts of the country practically unpopulated. The sheer vastness

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<sup>19</sup> Steinfelt, Hans-Wilhelm. *Hatet i Europa; 20 år etter Berlins andre fall (The Hatred of Europe; 20 years after the Wall came down)*. (Oslo: Cappelen Publishing House, 2009), 139.

<sup>20</sup> Downloaded from Transparency International, 21 February 2010; [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2009/cpi\\_2009\\_table](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009/cpi_2009_table).

<sup>21</sup> Stubb "Why was the Russia Forum founded?", 2.

<sup>22</sup> Steinfelt *20 år etter Berlins andre fall (The Hatred of Europe; 20 years after the Wall came down)*, 124.

of the country is very demanding and expensive to administrate. The size of the country and the lack of people, combined with poor communication infrastructure can become Russia's Achilles' heel.<sup>23</sup> Russia is roughly twice the size of the United States and covers 11 of the world's 24 time zones.<sup>24</sup> Russia's ability to control its vast land mass will become increasingly difficult. Nations adjacent to Russia are growing; for example, China will be approaching 1.4 billion people in 2050, while the prediction indicates that Russia is shrinking to 110 million people, during the same period.<sup>25</sup>

With fewer people to share the burden, Russia will find it increasingly difficult to cover the requirements of the state. In the State of the Nation Address in July 2000, then President Putin said, "Year by year, we, the citizens of Russia, are getting fewer and fewer."<sup>26</sup> Deaths have exceeded births since 1992; the birth rate is continuing to go down, while the death rate is going up, resulting in a population decline of nearly .05 percent annually.<sup>27</sup> CIA fact book catalogs the world's population growth rate and Russia ranks on 224th place out of the 233 countries listed.<sup>28</sup>

One of Russia's most critical demographic factors is its very low life expectancies. Russian males have average life expectancies of less than 60 years, a rate which is more than 15 years less than the United

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<sup>23</sup> INSS, Institute for National Strategic Studies. *Global Strategic Assessment 2009. Annual*, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2009), 254.

<sup>24</sup> DaVanzo, Julie, and Clifford Grammich. *Dire Demographics; Population Trends in the Russian Federation*. 2001, 5.

<sup>25</sup> General Naumann, General Shalikashvili, Field Marshal The Lord Inge, Admiral Lanxade, General van den Breemen, Bilski, Murray. *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Downloaded from RAND, 23 February 2010.  
[http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB5054/index1.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB5054/index1.html).

<sup>27</sup> DaVanzo og Grammich *Dire Demographics; Population Trends in the Russian Federation*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Downloaded from CIA fact book, 23 February 2010;  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2002rank.html?countryName=Russia&countryCode=rs&regionCode=cas&rank=224#rs>.

States.<sup>29</sup> Alcohol and suicide are the two primary 'killers' in Russia.<sup>30</sup> The tough decline in the economic situation and rapid social change in the 1990s forced many into unemployment, and subsequent loss of financial abilities. One of the few things people could afford was alcohol, which is very cheap. The author Hans Wilhelm Steinfeld observed that vodka was the only escape available for many in Russia during the most turbulent period in the 1990s.<sup>31</sup>

Solving Russia's demographic challenges is essential, since the current trend affects both its economic capacity and its security. Population density in Russia is in some areas, particularly in the Far East, so low that a large portion of the country is virtually unpopulated.<sup>32</sup> Moscow is concerned over the increased Chinese immigration into these areas. Due to the low Russian population, an increased Chinese immigration could easily lead to a Chinese dominated region inside Russia.<sup>33</sup> Russia sees this as a growing security problem and something that President Medvedev addresses as a major challenge towards 2020.<sup>34</sup>

Not only is a declining population a potential security problem, it also affects the nation's ability to feed itself, and have enough labor to produce necessary goods. This problem will affect the Far East region much more than the western part of Russia. However, the consequences will influence the entire nation.<sup>35</sup> Fewer people means a smaller labor

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<sup>29</sup> Downloaded from CIA fact book 22 February 2010,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>.

<sup>30</sup> DaVanzo og Grammich *Dire Demographics; Population Trends in the Russian Federation*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Steinfeld *20 år etter Berlins andre fall (The Hatred of Europe; 20 years after the Wall came down)*, 246.

<sup>32</sup> Downloaded from CIA fact book, 25 March 2010,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

<sup>33</sup> DaVanzo og Grammich *Dire Demographics; Population Trends in the Russian Federation*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Russian Federation National Security Strategy until 2020*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> According to a RAND report from 2001, the North region, the northern part of West Siberia, the northern part of Eastern Siberia and the far eastern region of Russia, totally estimated to be 3-4 times the size of Alaska, all have less than one person per square kilometer. Available data for Alaska indicates around 10 people per square miles. Downloaded the United States Census, 22 February 2010.

force and Russia will become reliant on importing labor, and possibly a lot of it. These foreign workers will possibly come from neighboring China, or further away from places like India. China and Russia share a common border of around 3,600 km.<sup>36</sup> The demographic imbalance between Russia and China is already gigantic, and will become worse as Russia declines and China prospers. To succeed in its economic development, Russia needs to address its demographic problem.

There are three ways to deal with the demographic situation; increase Russian immigration to the most affected areas, increase birth rates, or reduce death rates. It has proven difficult to motivate Russian immigration to the mostly remote areas that need it most; this leaves only two viable options.<sup>37</sup> Similar to many European countries, Russia has a low birth rate, but Russia is, compared to Europe, unique with its high death rate. This combination is obviously not a sustainable situation and this is the main reason for the grim population prediction. According to the CIA fact book, Russia has the 12th highest death rate in the world, which puts it on par with nations like Nigeria.<sup>38</sup> The Russian National Security Strategy highlights increased fertility rates and decreasing mortality rates as one of its strategic goals.<sup>39</sup>

On top of the economic challenges, the demographic issues act as a multiplier pushing Russia in a negative direction. Russia needs to focus the majority of its recourses on this problem, or it will threaten the entire existence of Russia.

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<http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/pdf/512popdn.pdf>. The data available for the United States used “less than 10” as the lowest category. It is therefore not possible to do a direct comparison with the RAND data that uses “less than 1” as their lowest category. Data also from DaVanzo, Julie, and Clifford Grammich. *Dire Demographics; Population Trends in the Russian Federation*. 2001, 6.

<sup>36</sup> INSS, *Global Strategic Assessment 2009*, 257.

<sup>37</sup> In Russia, as in many other nations there is a trend of moving toward the bigger cities to find employment, education and better lifestyle. To change this urbanization trend, areas outside the cities need to offer more, something that has proved difficult.

<sup>38</sup> CIA fact book, downloaded 22 February 2010;

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

<sup>39</sup> *Russian Federation National Security Strategy until 2020*, 14.

### **‘Near-Abroad’ related challenges**

The implosion of the USSR changed the geopolitical situation for the region, and areas, that earlier provided a security buffer for Russia, are now more insecure. The USSR, the superpower from the Cold War, was not beaten in battle, nor occupied by a foreign power; it disintegrated from within, according to Jonathan Eyal. Because of this disintegration, Russia was very weak and ‘defenseless’ for a long period. During this time, foreign influence grew and expanded into former USSR spheres of interest. Russia had not enough influence and power to show more than token resistance to this expansion. Russia felt dishonored and belittled. When the opportunity came in 2008 with Georgia, Russia had gained enough strength and they acted. Eyal believes “the West is paying now for mistakes committed twenty years ago.”<sup>40</sup> The ‘near-abroad’ is an area of interests for Russia and it is a source of potential disagreement and further security challenges.

When the USSR ceased to exist in 1991, 14 former USSR republics gained a degree of autonomy; their territory, known as the ‘near-abroad’, created a buffer zone around Russia.<sup>41</sup> Russia had been the dominant partner in the Soviet Union, and wanted to retain control over the sensitive geostrategic area surrounding it. The first decades after the collapse of the USSR, Russia was not strong enough, and could only watch the former USSR republics, one by one, seek a closer relationship with the ‘enemy’. However, something changed in Russia’s attitude and ability, and the ‘near-abroad’ hit a speed bump with the Georgian war.

Russia attacked Georgia 8 August 2008, catching the world completely unprepared for this type of reaction from Russia. Some saw

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<sup>40</sup> Eyal, Jonathan. *Europe and Russia: A Return to the Past*. October 2009, 44.

<sup>41</sup> The USSR consisted of 15 republics, which gained independence when USSR imploded: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Republic of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Downloaded from Encyclopædia Britannica eb.com, 11 May 2010; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics>.

this action as a Russian ‘push-back’ and a very vocal protest on the constantly closing-in NATO Alliance. Jonathan Eyal saw this conflict as; “disciplining Georgia was a long-term Russian objective in order to achieve control over the Caucasus.”<sup>42</sup> It was therefore a signal from Russia regarding who would set the agenda in the ‘near-abroad’.

The ‘near-abroad’ is a diverse mix of nations, with different abilities, political ambitions, and security orientations. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have joined NATO; Belarus and Ukraine have aligned themselves to a greater degree with Russia.<sup>43</sup> This diverse mix creates huge challenges for Russia and they interact with a large group of nations and organizations in a complex political, economic, and security environment.

Kazakhstan, is one of the largest republics in the ‘near-abroad’ and for years they maintained a close relationship with Russia. Russians immigrated to Kazakhstan and there was a flourishing trade between the two nations. This trend is changing. There are now indications that Kazakhstan is seeking a closer relationship with China.<sup>44</sup> China is looking for cheap and reliable energy resources, and are willing to build infrastructure and provide loans to Kazakhstan in return for these rights. Russia wants to retain Kazakhstan as an important buffer nation in the south, while China is seeking to gain more influence and secure its energy supply. This has resulted in a “tug of war” over influence in Kazakhstan; currently China is winning this ‘war’.<sup>45</sup> As a side note, Kazakhstan’s Prime Minister, Karim Masimov, speaks Chinese fluently

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<sup>42</sup> Eyal. *Europe and Russia: A Return to the Past*, 43.

<sup>43</sup> *The Russian-Belarusian Union and the Near Abroad*, Dr. Kaare Dahl Martinsen, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, June 2002, 33. Downloaded 12 May 2010 from; <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/martinsen.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> STRATFOR, Global Intelligence Downloaded 11 May 2010 from; [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/114565/analysis/kazakhstan\\_and\\_chinese\\_connection](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/114565/analysis/kazakhstan_and_chinese_connection).

<sup>45</sup> STRATFOR, Global Intelligence Downloaded 11 May 2010 from; [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/114565/analysis/kazakhstan\\_and\\_chinese\\_connection](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/114565/analysis/kazakhstan_and_chinese_connection).

and this has spurred a Chinese-language trend among enterprising Kazakhs.<sup>46</sup>

Russia initiated the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an organization that facilitated Russian influence in the former USSR republics.<sup>47</sup> The Foreign Policy Concept sees this organization as a priority and seeks to increase the cooperation in order to improve its mutual security.<sup>48</sup> The CIS continues to be important for Russia to improve political, economic and security cooperation. One central area of cooperation between Russia and the 'near-abroad' is the energy sector.

There is an interwoven economic relationship between Russia and the 'near-abroad'. Russia delivers a large percentage of the natural gas supply to several key CIS nations like Ukraine (66 percent), Belarus (98 percent) and Azerbaijan (36 percent), which serves to make them more reliant on Russia. Furthermore, Russia delivers 100 percent of the gas to Georgia, something that increases Russian influence over Georgia. These former USSR republics and Russia are in a similar interdependent relationship as the one discussed with EU; they are very reliant on each other, one as buyer and the other as seller.<sup>49</sup>

Russia has instigated the establishment of several organizations in an attempt to improve its authority and counter foreign influence in the 'near-abroad'. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) together with Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Russia dominates both organizations and seeks to enhance its influence in the region.<sup>50</sup> These organizations can position Russia more favorably in the

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<sup>46</sup> STRATFOR, Global Intelligence Downloaded 11 May 2010 from; [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/114565/analysis/kazakhstan\\_and\\_chinese\\_connection](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/114565/analysis/kazakhstan_and_chinese_connection).

<sup>47</sup> Downloaded from CIS web page, 11 May 2010; <http://www.cisstat.com/eng/cis.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Russian, Government web page. *New Russian Foreign Policy Concept*. 2008, 1

<sup>49</sup> Downloaded 25 March 2010.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Russia/NaturalGas.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Gentile Dmitry Medvedev's Article, *Go Russia!* 7. In addition, data downloaded 2 May 2010 from Global Security <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/csto.htm>.



region and improve its relationship with the ‘near-abroad’, in addition, it would be one way of hindering outside influence from organizations like NATO.

Of the organizations Russia is involved in, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is the organization that has the most easterly focus.<sup>51</sup> There is an overlap of members between most of the previous mentioned organizations, but SCO adds China to the mix. As previously discussed, China and Kazakhstan are seeking closer relationship and are increasing their trade partnership. There is an ongoing interaction between SCO, CSTO and EurAsEC, where the two leading nations (Russia and China) compete over influence.

Russia, China, and Kazakhstan are SCO members and there seems to be an ongoing competition over influence in the region. SCO and CSTO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2007 facilitating interaction and information exchange.<sup>52</sup> Some analysts’ see this as a Russian attempt to limit China’s influence and “freedom of maneuver in Central Asia”.<sup>53</sup> There are obvious differences between the two organizations, CSTO is an alliance style construct, including

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CSTO members are Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Russia’s clear preeminence within the organization limits its legitimacy. The three Baltic Republics, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan is not party to the CSTO. In 2006, Uzbekistan took steps to join the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), both organizations dominated by Russia. Additional data downloaded 23 February 2010; <http://ideas.repec.org/p/eab/tradew/2142.html> . The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) is an international economic organization designed to promote effectively the formation of a customs union and a single economic space among six CIS countries: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Moldova, Ukraine, and Armenia have observer status.

<sup>51</sup> The member states in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. SCO was founded in 2001, but build on the principles and members from the Shanghai Five, which was founded in 1996. Except for Uzbekistan, the other five countries had been members of the Shanghai Five. The main goals of the SCO are strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighborly relations among the member countries. Downloaded from SCO web page 12 May 2010; <http://www.sectsc.org/EN/brief.asp>.

<sup>52</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4716>.

<sup>53</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4716>.



obligations of military assistance, while the SCO is not an alliance and its focus is mainly soft security and economic issues.<sup>54</sup> “Russia defines itself as the main coordinator of all multilateral activities in Central Asia”.<sup>55</sup> This MoU with SCO is a step forward in Russia’s attempt to consolidate its position and remain the leading nation in Central Asia.<sup>56</sup> The latest Russian proposal that can affect their regional and possibly global influence is the European Security Pact.

President Medvedev took in 2008 the initiative for a European Security Pact, something the ‘near-abroad’ perceived as an attempt to gain the initiative and lead the security debate. The motive is similar to the one discussed with the organizations, where the intent is to prevent outside interference from reaching further into Russia's sphere of influence.<sup>57</sup> It caused a stir in the ‘near-abroad’ and Medvedev’s presentation inspired this comment in a one newspaper: “[the] Kremlin imagines that a security guarantee is the ‘right’ of Moscow to ensure political oversight over Russia's ‘zone of privileged interests’ -- a concept that was introduced last year. That is true even if there are those in the zone who do not want such oversight at all.”<sup>58</sup> As seen there are a mixed group of nations in the ‘near-abroad’ and their reaction varies depending on whose policy and perspective (East or West) they are mostly aligned with.

The baggage from the Cold War and the challenges from the vacuum left after the USSR’s implosion have caused problems for Russia and its relationship with the surrounding areas. These challenges

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<sup>54</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4716>.

<sup>55</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4716>.

<sup>56</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4716>.

<sup>57</sup> José Miguel Alonso. Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Studies, Mexico City. Downloaded 12 May from; <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=13525>.

<sup>58</sup> Smits, Uldis. *Moscow Wants To Limit Opportunities of Small Countries With Document*. 10 December 2009.

indicate a declining, rather than a rising Russia. This is possibly the worst-case scenario for security and stability in the region, because who will fill the gap if Russia disappears as a stabilizing factor in the region? Russian weakness, rather than its strength, should be of a more concern with regard to the security situation.<sup>59</sup> Russia fears outside interference in the 'near-abroad' and regards the former USSR republics striving for security, as a zero-sum game. Security gains for the 'near-abroad' seem to come at Russian expense.<sup>60</sup> The challenges related to economy, demographic, and the 'near-abroad' are significant, and in order to improve in these areas, Russia needs to focus its resources and efforts toward these problems, rather than toward external organizations like NATO.

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<sup>59</sup> General Naumann, General Shalikashvili, Field Marshal The Lord Inge, Admiral Lanxade, General van den Breemen, Bilski, Murray. *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World*. 2007, 63.

<sup>60</sup> Oksana Antonenko, Bastian Giegerich. *Rebooting NATO-Russia Relations*. Survival, Volume 51, Issue 2 April 2009, pages 13 - 21. May 2009, 14.

## Chapter 5

### Is the possible solution to admit Russia into NATO?

*If the Almighty were to rebuild the world and asked me for advice, I would have English Channels round every country. And the atmosphere would be such that anything which attempted to fly would be set on fire.*

*-- Sir Winston Churchill*

So far, this thesis has looked at different aspects of the Russian-NATO relationship, their perception of each other, and challenges facing their cooperation. Additionally, Russia has further internal and external challenges associated with its raw material-based economy, negative demographic trend, and its geostrategic location. Tackling these challenges will demand significant time and resources. Time and resources are two things that seem to be running out for Russia.

The Cold War was a long and dramatic part of the common history for these nations, and it left baggage that we have to deal with even today. This baggage and subsequent interaction between these players have established a perception that drives their current interaction and possibly affects future relations. NATO declares it has no enemies; their publicized goal is the defense of their members against any threat. Russia might perceive this differently, particularly based upon the continuing enlargement of NATO, creeping closer and closer to Russian borders.

NATO and Russia are preoccupied with each other, and the perceived associated threats, certainly looks like the Cold War. They need to move on from their Cold War history and reevaluate their relationship based upon current and future challenges. The previous chapter highlights some of the challenges facing Russia and the need to focus its attention elsewhere, rather than on NATO. NATO is not Russia's main problem, and a weak Russia will be to NATO's

disadvantage. This indicates that both sides can benefit from tighter integration and better cooperation. Can Russia solve its current predicament by a closer cooperation with NATO, or as a minimum by establishing a more friendly relationship? This chapter will investigate this question.

### **Current relationship between Russia and NATO**

NATO and Russia have cooperated in several forums for nearly 20 years, a cooperation born out of necessity due to the vital security positions Russia and NATO hold. Now with the Cold War further in the background and new challenges emerging, can this relationship become something more?

Contradictory to alliance theory, NATO did not disappear when the threat from the USSR and the Cold War ended.<sup>1</sup> With the ‘total’ collapse of the USSR, NATO ended up in an asymmetric power scenario where the Alliance was clearly dominant. NATO’s member states managed to retain the organization and even reinvent the Alliance as a crises management instrument for all its members.

East and West have cooperated in different NATO forums for nearly two decades. In 1991, NATO invited the USSR to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC).<sup>2</sup> In 1992, NATO extended this invitation to all the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations. The NACC evolved in 1997 into the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). The EAPC now has 50 members; NATO’s 28 countries and 22 partner countries. Russia participates as one of the 22 partner countries.<sup>3</sup> This large forum has no particular focus on Russia, and its primary goal is to

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<sup>1</sup> Walt, Stephen M. *Why alliances endure or collapse*. 1997 *Survival*, Volume 39, Issue 1 Spring 1997, pages 156 – 179, 170. Downloaded 24 February 2010 from *Survival* <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/694824484-8685402/content~db=all~content=a791138684>.

<sup>2</sup> When the USSR collapsed in 1991, the invitation was ‘transferred’ to Russia.

<sup>3</sup> NATO. Downloaded 24 February 2010; <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb020201.htm>.

facilitate interaction and communication. To remedy this lack of focus on the main players, the creation of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) focused on the need for Russia and NATO to have a specific forum for cooperation.<sup>4</sup> The PJC gave Russia a more exclusive access to discuss relevant issues with NATO. The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) replaced the PCJ in 2002.<sup>5</sup> The significance of all these forums is the fact that they actually exist. During the Cold War, NATO and the Warsaw Pact (WP) faced each other as enemies, but had no dedicated forum for discussion.<sup>6</sup>

Without a forum for discussion, misunderstandings, mistrust, and uncertainty could roam freely since neither part had access to an adequate communication mechanism.<sup>7</sup> Previously the United Nations was the only arena where all the parties could meet. These newer forums, which were established post Cold War, especially the ones that provide a direct NATO-Russian interaction, can better facilitate direct communication and open up the membership for improved cooperation. Russia and NATO have had several available venues for cooperation the last 20 years, and there is a well-established system for this interaction, which has helped to facilitate a better understanding.

The NATO – Russian relationship has survived several difficult periods, yet the desire for cooperation has overcome many disagreements. The NRC has survived several critical phases in its nearly 10 years of existence. Cooperation has continued despite three rounds of NATO enlargements, deployment of NATO fighter jets to the

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<sup>4</sup> PJC established in 1997. Downloaded 3 May 2010.  
[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50090.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm?)

<sup>5</sup> Russia named this committee the Russia-NATO Council (RNC), therefore the two different abbreviations.

<sup>6</sup> NATO history, downloaded 12 May 2010,  
<http://www.nato.int/multi/video/lectures/031104/031104a.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> USSR as one of the original United Nation members (24 October 1945) had access via UN forums to most of the NATO states; however this was not in the capacity of WP, nor particularly related to a NATO-WP cooperation. Downloaded 12 May 2010;  
<http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml>.

Baltic States (from 2004, which is still ongoing and possibly will become a permanent fixture), a war in Iraq, and the prolonged discussion over Missile Defense Systems in Europe.<sup>8</sup> All these examples have been 'bumps in road' for the relationship, but it has survived.

The most recent and possibly most serious 'bump' in the NRC relationship came with the Georgian conflict in early August 2008, "where the Alliance suspended formal meetings of the NRC and cooperation in some areas, while it considered the implications of Russia's actions for the NATO-Russia relationship."<sup>9</sup> Despite this setback, it appears that the relationship has normalized again and both parties seem to realize that working together is better than the alternative.<sup>10</sup>

To expand the relationship between Russia and NATO, two vital areas must succeed in order to produce a positive outcome. One area is the political side; a different and possibly more challenging area is the military establishment. The Russian-NATO political and diplomatic sides have worked together for nearly 20 years in the previously described forums, and there are established processes and procedures for this relationship. Although there will be challenges here too, it is the military side that demand the most effort.

The military side is moving slower, but major structural adjustments in the Russian armed forces are progressing. These adjustments or reductions aspire to form a more efficient, effective, and flexible modern force. The main change, something that can take years to fully complete is that Russia seek to abandon mass mobilization. Even if this becomes a longwinded and painful process, it indicates that Moscow is trying to change its traditional perception of NATO as a threat, where

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, Martin A. *Russia and NATO since 1991, from Cold War through cold peace to partnership?* (New York: Routhledge, 2006), 103-105.

<sup>9</sup> NATO. *Website of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC)*, 2009. From NATO's web page; <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> NATO decides to normalize the relationship with Russia in March 2009. Downloaded 3 May 2010 from, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50091.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50091.htm).

there was a need for a massive mobilization army.<sup>11</sup> A closer cooperation with NATO will mean a transformation in equipment, training, and doctrine for Russia in order to become par with the more sophisticated Western standards.<sup>12</sup>

This author believes that a nation's military establishment represents some of the most conservative elements in a country, and if this is the case for Russia too, then the military might be the area that will have the hardest time adjusting to a closer relationship with NATO. A similar adjustment must obviously also take place inside NATO, and in particular for the NATO nations in the 'near-abroad'. This adjustment will take time, maybe decades. As for Russia, Alexis Giannoulis claims "[m]any in Moscow still think within a cold-war framework. Changes do not tend to happen frequently and sudden changes can be proved to have negative long-term effects, much like the economic *shock therapy* of mid-1990s."<sup>13</sup> As stated earlier, time is not on Russia's side and they need to move with a degree of urgency.

### **Can the 'near-abroad' tolerate Russia in NATO?**

NATO has continued to grow, attracting new members that see a benefit in what NATO provides. The last three NATO enlargements

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<sup>11</sup> Alexis Giannoulis: *Russian Military Reform: Balancing reality and doctrine*. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://ceregreece.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Russias-Military-Reform-Balancing-Reality-and-Doctrine.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Alexis Giannoulis: *Russian Military Reform: Balancing reality and doctrine*. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://ceregreece.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Russias-Military-Reform-Balancing-Reality-and-Doctrine.pdf>. According to the same article; Russian forces showed poor performance during the 2008 conflict in Georgia. "Lack of state-of-the-art equipment, inability to operate during the night, poor or non-existent computer systems to enhance command and control, less flexible deployment too many loses especially of airborne units." The Russian leadership wanted to move forward with much needed reforms but they met strong resistance from the military establishment.

<sup>13</sup> Alexis Giannoulis: *Russian Military Reform: Balancing reality and doctrine*. Downloaded 12 May 2010; <http://ceregreece.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Russias-Military-Reform-Balancing-Reality-and-Doctrine.pdf>.

integrated former USSR republics into the Alliance. One of the reasons many had for joining NATO was to seek 'protection' from Russia. The prospect of Russia joining NATO contradicts the rationale these nations had for joining NATO in the first place, and it will be a challenge to convince them otherwise. This section will analyze the complex and sensitive situation between the 'near-abroad', Russia, and their relationship to NATO.

The Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have long regarded Russia as a threatening nation because of the occupation and harsh treatment they suffered under Soviet control until they re-gained their freedom in 1991.<sup>14</sup> They came out of the Cold War as free nations, but with a lot of Cold War baggage and a superpower next to their borders. In their views, NATO was their only possibility to gain a security guarantee.<sup>15</sup>

This author has led an Air Surveillance & Air Policing detachment (spring 2007) in Lithuania and travelled in the Baltic states considerably since 1999. If there is one thing that strikes this author as a significant hurdle, then it is the negative view non-Russian Baltic peoples have of everything that is Russian. In general, they seem to be willing to do anything, as long as it will not benefit Russia in any way. Maybe this is a normal reaction, a 'payback' for the decades of Soviet occupation. In some cases, particularly visible in bilateral political relationship with Russia, the rhetoric from the region has been very strong and in the author's view, counterproductive.

The 'near-abroad' is very sensitive towards Russian military activity close to their borders. The Baltic States, together with Poland,

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<sup>14</sup> The reference 'Baltic States' is not very popular in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This description reminds them of the occupation time and sounds like they are still a USSR republic. As with most other sovereign nations, they prefer to be addressed by their individual nation name.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen J. Blank, *NATO enlargement and the Baltic States: What can the great powers do?* November 18, 1997, Strategic Studies Institute Downloaded from <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub146.pdf>. 19 May 2010.



reacted very strongly during last year's Russian military exercises (Zapad and Ladoga 2009) held near their borders. Due to these nations' relatively short history as free and independent, this type of military demonstration caused bad memories and fear to surface. 'Older' NATO nations have lived in freedom and peace since the end of World War II, and in their daily life, people do not focus on a threat or the risk of occupation. Therefore, it might be difficult for NATO, as such a diverse organization, to come to a common perception in how to deal with Russia.

Several of the former USSR republics had, and possibly still have, a unique and very challenging transition towards status as stable, democratic nations. At the same time, they are trying to implement a quadruple transition where they are: (1) attempting to establish a new nation, (2) creating all the necessary political institutions, (3) focusing on a transition to a market led economic system, and (4) increasing their security by tying themselves to a security provider.<sup>16</sup> The challenges facing many former USSR republics are larger and more challenging a transition than the ones many other nations face.

Looking at a nation like Estonia, their post-communist transition could primarily focus on democracy and market. They were already a nation prior to communist rule and had some experience in international relations, giving them a head start in the process.<sup>17</sup> Estonia quickly turned to NATO and the EU as the outside provider for security and economic development, respectively. Estonia's transition was therefore easier and was not a quadruple transition.

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<sup>16</sup> Political Studies Association, *POLITICS Vol 21/3, 2001*, 174. Downloaded 3 May 2010, [http://www.taraskuzio.net/Economic%20Transition\\_files/economics-transition.pdf](http://www.taraskuzio.net/Economic%20Transition_files/economics-transition.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> *POLITICS Vol 21/3, 2001*, 173. Also from this article; Poland, although not part of the USSR, but still a communist dominated country had to perform a double transition. They had a degree of market economy in the service sector and private agriculture, which helped the transition.

Belarus on the other hand, was in a much different condition than Estonia. Belarus was too adapted to the USSR way of life and they had little or no experience as an independent country to build upon in their efforts to create their nation after 1991. Belarus was not part of the gradual democratizing process that took place in some USSR republics on the tail end of the Soviet period.<sup>18</sup> A “Sovietophile” group gained power early in the transition process (1994), halting any positive progression of democratic politics and open economy.<sup>19</sup> One side of such a transition is the practical part, with legislations and regulations; another is the mental part in peoples’ “hearts and minds”.<sup>20</sup> It takes time to establish a national identity and an understanding for the responsibility sovereignty entails. Belarus truly faced a quadruple transition.

Each of these four tasks in a quadruple transition (establish a nation, create institutions, stimulate market economy, and increase the security) is in itself complicated; put together in two decades, they become nearly impossible. It is not difficult to understand that these nations are extra sensitive to anything that can upset their current security balance.

This fear of upsetting the balance became evident in the reaction from ‘near-abroad’ countries to the proposed new Russian Security Pact. They see this as a change of focus and a way for Russia to diminish NATO influence over the ‘near-abroad’, which will affect their security. As previously quoted, the Kremlin sees the ‘near-abroad’ as their “zone of privileged interests” and the new Russian security proposal seeks to impose oversight even “if there are those in the zone who do not want such oversight at all.”<sup>21</sup> The ‘near-abroad’ states are very sensitive

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<sup>18</sup> *POLITICS Vol 21/3, 2001*, 172.

<sup>19</sup> *POLITICS Vol 21/3, 2001*, 170.

<sup>20</sup> *POLITICS Vol 21/3, 2001*, 175.

<sup>21</sup> Smits, Uldis. *Moscow Wants To Limit Opportunities of Small Countries With Document*. (Riga: 9 December 2009).

regarding everything that involves Russia, a fact both sides have to take into consideration. The 'near-abroad' nations have through their different organizations, aligned themselves toward either Russia or NATO. There is a gradual change amongst the 'near-abroad' and they are progressing along with their quadruple transition. NATO has also changed and this affects the 'near-abroad'.

NATO has gradually evolved and changed its focus since 1991 to a more 'out-of-area' focus. In the 'old' NATO, the focus was on defending the geographic area belonging to the member states, frequently referred to as 'Article 5 operations'.<sup>22</sup> The new member nations want to rely on the security umbrella provided by the Alliance. When the main adversary disappeared, new areas opened up and regions previously that were 'out of reach' for NATO became accessible. This change is probably to some members' disadvantage, and they want to adjust NATO's focus. The newest NATO nations feel that they are losing some of their security assurance when they no longer are the focal point.<sup>23</sup>

The 'near-abroad' states still perceive Russia to be a threat towards their security. This reality, together with the still lingering Cold War baggage, is currently inhibiting the possibility of Russia joining NATO.

### **Would it be possible to envision Russia as a NATO member?**

The previously described challenges are the backdrop that NATO and Russia have to deal with; they also have to solve several of these problems prior to moving forward with a closer integration of Russia into NATO. This section will discuss if it is realistic to envision Russia as a NATO member. As far as this study can ascertain, there are no strict formal or legal obstacles stopping such a membership. The hurdles are to some degree practical, but primarily the obstacles to such inclusion are simply the mindset of the membership at large.

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<sup>22</sup> NATO. *The North Atlantic Treaty*. (Washington D.C. 4 April 1949).

<sup>23</sup> Szayna, Thomas S. *NATO enlargement, 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defense Planning and Shaping*. (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 25.

To gauge potential members, NATO uses a list of criteria to assist in the decision process. Nevertheless, the current NATO members subjectively decide what nation qualifies. In 1995, NATO conducted a “Study on NATO Enlargement” in order to establish a set of criteria to strive for in considering potential new members. The Study concluded that there were certain qualities they would have to demonstrate. These included: (1) a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; (2) the fair treatment of minority populations; (3) a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts; (4) the ability and willingness to make a military contribution [to] NATO operations; and (5) a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.<sup>24</sup>

The above-mentioned qualities are a mirror image of most countries in the West and can describe, therefore, most NATO members.<sup>25</sup> The majority of the requirements focused on ‘soft’ criteria associated with domestic political arrangements, indicating NATO’s focus on stability and positive democratic development. These requirements are subjective, and they give NATO the ability to use judgment when selecting nations for membership. NATO can accept the nations that they believe are best compatible to NATO. With these requirements as a guide, NATO could give a firm commitment of membership to Russia. Such a commitment would be mutually beneficial and something solid to work towards for both parties.<sup>26</sup>

Can every nation join NATO? Asking NATO, they will respond in accordance with NATO’s philosophy expressed as the “open door policy”, which states that membership is open to “European States in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of

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<sup>24</sup> Downloaded 4 April 2010 from NATO’s Homepage;  
[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49212.htm#1995](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm#1995).

<sup>25</sup> Baker III, James A. *Russia in NATO?*, 97. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2001. Published in *The Washington Quarterly* 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Baker III, James A. *Russia in NATO?*, 98.

the North Atlantic area.”<sup>27</sup> However, it is not this simple, as there will always be a discussion regarding the impact of inviting a certain nation, as we saw when Germany ‘stopped’ the membership process associated with Georgia. Asking Russia the same question and one hears a loud and clear ‘NO’. Russia still regards the ‘near-abroad’ as Russian sphere of interests, and sees NATO as meddling with their interests. The war in Georgia was a clear signal on where Russian policy stood.

NATO operates along two central characteristics, one is the consensus principle, and the other one is the collective self-defense principle (or Article 5 operations).<sup>28</sup> The consensus principle, gives each member an equal vote and the ability to veto any decision. Adding to the skepticism from some nations to inviting Russia, the consensus policy would create a situation where Russia wielding a veto, ‘de facto’ controls NATO. The consensus policy is one obvious area to address prior to trying to invite Russia into any form of deeper relationship with NATO. It would be hard, if not impossible, for many nations, particularly the ‘near-abroad’ to accept Russia as a member in NATO with the current consensus policy intact.

Less problematic than the consensus principle is NATO’s promise of collective defense. NATO regards an attack on one member as an attack on the entire Alliance. Would possible Russian membership require an amendment to Article 5? Russia’s long border with China and Central Asian states would stretch the collective defensive system immensely. A possible solution might be to adopt special terms, where the collective defensive guarantee is limited to Russia’s Western regions.

A further integration of Russia into NATO would affect the entire northern hemisphere, but in particular the ‘near-abroad’ region. NATO

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<sup>27</sup> *The North Atlantic Treaty*. 1949. NATO’s “open door policy” is based upon Article 10.

<sup>28</sup> Downloaded 24 February 2010;

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49178.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49178.htm). A decision reached by consensus is an agreement reached by common consent, a decision that each member country accepts. This means that when a NATO announces a decision, it is the expression of the collective will of all the members of the Alliance.

membership would mean more than military cooperation and support. It would mean a much more interwoven foreign and security policy. The two largest nations, the United States and Russia would, by joint membership, gain interaction and influence that stretch to Washington and Moscow. How the 'near-abroad' would react to a possible Russian membership is one of the most important factors to take into consideration.

Some NATO members will struggle to accept Russia in NATO since Russia was the primary rationale for the forming of the Alliance. However, NATO has admitted several 'adversaries' into the organization. The post-Cold War enlargements have included several former Warsaw Pact (WP) countries, by definition former adversaries to NATO.<sup>29</sup> It is, nevertheless, clear that there are some emotional differences between admitting any of these countries versus Russia. Arguably, some nations were compelled to become a WP member during the Cold War, and it is easier to accept these nations as NATO members. NATO's involvement in the 'near-abroad' has an impact on the NATO-Russia relationship and the potential for future NATO expansion is making the relationship with Russia more tense and could negatively impact the accession effort.

The USSR has twice applied or indicated they wanted to join NATO; regardless of this interest, there are challenges that both sides have to solve prior to a Russian membership in NATO. Nikita Khrushchev applied for a membership in 1954, prior to the establishment of the WP.<sup>30</sup> The USSR applied again in 1991 when President Boris Yeltsin wrote to NATO stating, "Russia is considering her

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<sup>29</sup> Former WP countries that now are NATO members include Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia (Czech Republic and Slovakia was one nation, named Czechoslovakia until 1 January 1993), Hungary, Poland, and Romania. Downloaded from NATO's web page 12 May 2010;

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/nato\\_countries.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/nato_countries.htm), and from the text of the Warsaw Pact treaty, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955warsawpact.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Krupnick, Charles. *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*. (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 238.

entry in the North Atlantic Alliance.”<sup>31</sup> President Yeltsin viewed this as a serious, but definitively a long-term political goal. A membership would foster understanding and trust between the nations and in President Yeltsin’s eyes a close, positive relationship. Actually, it was during the same meeting where Yeltsin’s letter was read, that the message came that announced the downfall of the USSR.<sup>32</sup>

NATO did not take this Russian application too seriously and regarded it more as a question for the future. At the current time, NATO is not prepared to consider the possibility of having Russia as a member.<sup>33</sup> For Russia and NATO to continue their positive development and cooperation, it is vital that Russia understands that its ‘near-abroad’ strategy should focus more on the utilization of the carrot, rather than the wielding of a stick.<sup>34</sup>

Stability and security are NATO’s main goals, and with Russia as a central player in Europe and Asia, it is difficult to see a stable European security order without Russia as a central participant.<sup>35</sup> The future of Russia will significantly affect NATO. A reemerging Russia with greater

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<sup>31</sup> There are several sources supporting this letter and its content, but one source from Russia claimed it all was a typing mistake. “The response to the letter in Brussels was explosive”. The foreign ministers of NATO-member countries were puzzled, even stunned. As it turned out, the confusion was all due to a typographical mistake: a typist in the Kremlin had failed to type the word “not” before the word “considering.”

Downloaded from The Russian Journal 23 February 2010;

<http://www.russiajournal.com/node/1067>. In addition there are data from New York Times, downloaded 23 Feb 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/21/world/soviet-disarray-yeltsin-says-russia-seeks-to-join-nato.html?pagewanted=1>. The article is from the New York Time 21 December 1991.

<sup>32</sup> Downloaded from New York Times 23 February 2010,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/21/world/soviet-disarray-yeltsin-says-russia-seeks-to-join-nato.html?pagewanted=1>.

<sup>33</sup> Downloaded from New York Times 23 Feb 2010,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/21/world/soviet-disarray-yeltsin-says-russia-seeks-to-join-nato.html?pagewanted=1>. The article is from the New York Time 21 December 1991. “NATO officials, from Secretary General Wornier on down, seemed too taken aback by the Russian letter to give any coherent response. Mr. Wornier suggested at his news conference that Mr. Yeltsin was not actually asking to join.”

<sup>34</sup> Legvold, Robert. *The Russian File; How to Move Toward a Strategic Partnership*. August 2009, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Krupnick, Charles. *Almost NATO; Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*. (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 231.

powers than today, or a troubled Russia engulfed in its economic and demographic challenges will weigh heavily on NATO's security. Which of the scenarios is worse is hard to say, but a weak and possibly failing Russia is probably the least favorable situation for the Allies.

There are several areas where Russia and NATO have shared interests, which is a good start for cooperation. President Medvedev, in Russia's Foreign Policy Concept, focuses on these areas, including the Middle East, the Far East (China) and the 'near-abroad'.<sup>36</sup> NATO and Russia have many compatible interests in these areas. Continuing to build on these shared interests would be a sensible way forward.

The most promising approach would be to gradually increase the cooperation and make small-scale compromises in order to solve challenges as they arrive.<sup>37</sup> NATO and Russia should start with the areas they share interests in and progress from there; this methodology would be a more successful, but obviously a much more long-term approach. The 'near-abroad' must be active participants in this process, ensuring that their concerns are sufficiently met, too. By building mutual trust and adequate transparency in the relationship, the 'near-abroad' might eventually accept Russian membership in NATO.

Russia's admittance into NATO is plausible because they might eventually meet NATO's criteria set for membership. Additionally, Russia's entrance into NATO would have a positive effect on Russian development, similar to the effect it has had on other NATO candidates. It also could help NATO and Russia get beyond Cold War mindsets and work for peace across the region.

If the demographic predictions for Russia were correct, such a grim development would drain significant resources from the nation, and subsequently limit its options. This situation, linked with the already

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<sup>36</sup> Russian, Government web page. *New Russian Foreign Policy Concept*. 2008, 15.

<sup>37</sup> Rumer, Eugene and Stent, Angela. *Russia and the West*. Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, vol. 51, no. 2, April-May 2009, pp. 91-104. May 2009, 101.



highly intertwined economic relationship between Russia and the European NATO nations, can provide an opportunity for increased cooperation. These circumstances combined with NATO's and Russia's shared worry for the future of the 'near-abroad' will leave Russia with little choice. NATO is Russia's best bet, and a common security solution would be of mutual benefit.

## Conclusions, recommendations and implications

*I see no reason why...there should not ultimately arise the United States of Europe.*

*-- Sir Winston Churchill*

While completing the work on this thesis, some interesting news appeared from Russia. Russian forces annually arrange a military parade in Moscow to mark the end of World War II. At this year's parade, on Sunday, 9 May 2010, military personnel from the United States and some European nations marched for the first time next to Russian forces across Red Square. The same source that reflected on this event stated, "Russia has started to react to the more cooperative policy from the West."<sup>1</sup> Earlier in 2010, Hillary Clinton, the United States Secretary of State, invited Russia to "cooperate more closely with NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] despite their differences," and she went on to say, "we want a cooperative NATO-Russia relationship that produces concrete results and draws NATO and Russia closer together."<sup>2</sup> After all, maybe it is possible to put the memory of the Cold War behind us and move on with a new vision for the security environment in Europe. This chapter summarizes the research project and presents conclusions, recommendations and implications.

For decades, NATO has been the cornerstone for many nations' security arrangements. Some, however, presumed that this large organization had outlived its purpose after the Cold War, but NATO has since transformed itself to remain relevant. This study focused on NATO and Russia, two parties traditionally separated by an 'iron-curtain' of ideology, interests, and politics. Russia has some substantial security

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<sup>1</sup> Wall Street Journal, Russia, *In Internal Report, Signals Shift Toward U.S.* By Gregory L. White, 12 May 2010 [Early Bird], 13.

<sup>2</sup> Downloaded 23 February 2010; from Beirut Al-Manar TV Online via Open Source.

related challenges facing it and this paper will test the thesis that NATO can solve or help to solve these security challenges. In order to complete this assessment, this paper addressed the question: Is NATO a Russian security threat, or should Russia see itself as a potential Alliance member?

The Cold War was a period of continuous ideological competition between communism and capitalism, which manifested itself in strong rhetoric and increased tension. The parties' perception, rhetoric, and behavior affected the tension during the Cold War, and continues to affect the relationship in the years after the implosion of the USSR (1991). The freedom gained when the 'iron curtain' lifted had the bitter after-taste of continued East-West tension, rather than the forecasted reduction in tension. The Cold War events were instrumental in building negative perceptions between the two 'sides'. It is certain that the baggage from the Cold War colored (and still colors) the relationship between the USSR and NATO and can partly explain present day suspicion and distrust. Based upon their shared history, there is little reason for optimism of a shared security solution. Nevertheless, this Cold War baggage in itself should not prohibit cooperation or partnership with Russia.

Russia and NATO currently enjoy a considerably improved relationship compared to that experienced during the Cold War, but there are still significant challenges associated with the relationship. Russia lost most of its 'status and prestige' because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia's low self-esteem possibly leads to perceiving most factors as a potential threat. NATO's enlargement and 'out-of-area strategy' are factors that add to this tension. The combined effect of perceived military and political threats from NATO has increased the tension and caused a near paranoid fear from Russia. The main question for an improved relationship is if NATO will continue its work

for security in Europe together with Russia, or at least “with an eye to Russia”.<sup>3</sup>

Russia still lists NATO as a threat in its guiding strategy documents, but sees potential benefits from the ability of NATO as a security and stability provider. A more sensitive NATO has understood that it must treat the ‘near-abroad’ around Russia with great care. This understanding together with the intertwined economic relationship with the European NATO nations can create the stability Russia needs to move forward.

As far as this study can ascertain, there are no formal obstacles stopping Russia from becoming a NATO member. NATO Russian Council should act as a stepping-stone, leading the way for an improved relationship, which capitalize on the possibilities and opportunities from this longstanding cooperation. With NATO as the provider of increased stability and as a strategic partner, Russia should stop viewing NATO as a threat and move forward with an increased cooperation based upon common shared values and an equal partnership.

Russia has too much focus on NATO as a security threat; there are other and more pressing challenges that need attention. Russia has significant challenges associated with economy, demographic issues and the challenge from the ‘near abroad’. Russia’s economy is highly dependent on export of hydrocarbons, and particular sensitive for any fluctuation in this market. Experts project Russia’s population will decline from today’s 140 million to 110 million by 2050, causing increased pressure on their ability to provide for their own security and ensure a large enough labor force for the economy. The Russian ‘near-abroad’ is a constant and difficult problem and the security and cooperation avenue chosen by these former USSR republics directly affects Russian security.

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<sup>3</sup> Trenin, Dmitri. *NATO’S new Strategic Concept – A few thoughts related to Russia*. 2009, 3.

In sum, these challenges indicate a declining, rather than a rising Russia. These challenges are significant, and in order to improve in these areas, Russia needs to focus its resources and efforts toward these problems, rather than in the direction of NATO. Time and resources are two things that seem to be running out for Russia and they need to readjust their security policy to be able to tackle these challenges.

The solution to this security dilemma is to invite Russia to become a NATO member. The Alliance must approach the NATO-Russian relationship 'head-on', because it is fundamental to the future security situation in Europe, with potential impact across the globe.

NATO's guiding documents have no formal obstructions hindering Alliance membership for Russia; the hurdles are mainly in the mindset of the current and future membership writ large. It would be unproductive to maintain a system that continues to divide Europe. Russia and NATO can establish a pragmatic relationship, one where they see the mutual benefits of cooperation, rather than conflict. We have already seen such a partnership in effect in Kosovo and Afghanistan. The NRC serves as the natural building block for this closer relationship. A pragmatic relationship should be the foundation for a more stable and positive partnership – one where Russia's interwoven relationship with NATO gradually will transform Russian views and allow it to assimilate the norms, values and standards of NATO, becoming an equal partner and member.

Both entities need to address these three areas prior to Russia advancing with any realistic hope for NATO membership; NATO's consensus principle, the Alliance's Article 5, and the challenges related to the 'near-abroad' states. First, NATO operates today based upon the consensus principle. It is not plausible for Russia to become a member

with this principle intact.<sup>4</sup> This could create a situation where a Russian veto effectively would control NATO. In order to move forward with Russian membership, this is one obvious area to address.

Next, NATO regards an attack on one member as an attack on the entire Alliance, as stated in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Would Russian membership require an amendment to Article 5? Russia's enormous size and geographical location will bring NATO into new and untested areas, significantly stretching the collective defensive system. A possible solution might be to adopt special provisions, where the collective defensive guarantee is limited to Russia's Western regions.

Third, the 'near-abroad' region is the last of the three problem areas, but the most difficult one. The two previous areas are more practical and a pragmatic approach can solve them. The 'near-abroad' is a more sensitive and challenging area. Several nations in the 'near-abroad' region joined NATO to improve their security situation; their most feared adversary was, and remains, Russia. It is therefore essential that all parties gradually learn to accept and trust each other, leading to a situation where the 'near-abroad' countries have the ability to reevaluate their threat perception. Prior to inviting Russia to join NATO, the Allies must institute a gradual process that prepares both parties for this 'security-revolution'.

Russia's admittance into NATO is plausible, because it can qualify for NATO's criteria regarding democratic and economic qualities.<sup>5</sup> With a clear membership commitment to Russia, NATO can motivate for a positive development similar to the effect it had on other recent NATO

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<sup>4</sup> Downloaded 24 February 2010; [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49178.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49178.htm). A decision reached by consensus is an agreement reached by common consent; one that each member country accepts. This means that when NATO announces a "decision," it is the expression of the collective will of all the sovereign states that are members of the Alliance.

<sup>5</sup> As discussed earlier in this paper, NATO bases its criteria for membership on a subjective evaluation. Currently, Russia will most likely not qualify to the NATO standards; however, Russia can change and eventually qualify.

candidates. Such a positive development would increase the stability in the region, because it diminish the tension and insecurity that currently affects both NATO, Russia and the 'near-abroad'. Furthermore, it could also help NATO and Russia get beyond the Cold War mindsets and work collectively for peace across the region.

Although Russia has disagreed with the earlier enlargement of NATO, it has had a positive impact on their western flank. The new members that have joined NATO since the Cold War, particularly the 1999 and 2004 enlargement, added a belt of nations along Russia's western flank. This development have increased stability in the region, and improved the nations' ability to take care of themselves. In sum, this resulted in less uncertainty and a more predictable future for the entire region.

With Russia as a NATO member, the 'region of stability' would increase significantly. The divided Europe has harmed security cooperation and relationship for decades, Russia's current and future predicament opens up an opportunity that can close this divide and develop a Pan-EuroAtlantic security system. Such a system can refocus its resources toward common threats, rather than expending them 'fighting' internally in Europe.

With Russia in NATO, the two entities can tackle the challenges related to economic, demographic, and 'near-abroad' issues on a much wider front. The interwoven economic relationship with the European NATO nations will have another 'leg' to stand on and there will be no security rational for holding back or cutting energy supply. A NATO membership will not solve Russia's demographic problem. Nevertheless, a collective defense mechanism can help compensate Russia's necessity to maintain a large defensive force, in a situation where its population is in decline. The 'near-abroad' problem will become narrower and possibly easier to manage, since the number of nation that are in the 'contested area' and not NATO members will be fewer. In sum, Russia would be in

a better security situation and could focus resources on more relevant areas to ensure a positive development.

The future is difficult to predict, and who would have dared in 1991, to predict a strong NATO consisting of 28 members that strives forward as a regional security provider. NATO has gone from a 'limited' defensive organization to a flexible, broad-based collective security forum and crises manager. It is NATO's main goal to increase its member's security; similarly, Russia is working to improve its security. By combining these efforts with Russia as a NATO member, the entire dynamic in the security environment will change for the better.

This thesis concludes that Russia has other and more pressing problems than NATO, and Russia currently constitutes a minimal threat to the Alliance. A future membership in the alliance would be mutually beneficial, since it adds security and stability to Europe, for both the Allies and Russia.

Russia and NATO should seek to solve their security problems in one common security organization, and the only credible organization that can achieve this is NATO. The Alliance is the only institution, which has both the political capacity to integrate Russia, the credibility to provide security for its members, and the military capacity to respond to new threats.



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